Anish Giri

My Junior Years in 20 Games

By Anish Giri

NEW IN CHESS

The proceeds of this book will go to an educational project for children in Nepal.

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New In Chess 2014

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Preface

'Once upon a time there was a little boy who lived in the Land of the High Mountains, far away from Holland. Every day, Ajansy went to school to learn language and arithmetic. Ajansy liked being in school, because it was beside the Bal Mandir, the children's temple. And his mother taught there. But there was something strange — he never dreamt of mountains (the highest in the whole world!), but always of water, seas and oceans. In the Land of the High Mountains, water was scarce, so when he grew up, Ajansy went off to look for water. His search first led him to Czar Peter's burg. Things were very different there from the Land of the High Mountains, mainly because everything was so much flatter and there was a lot more water. Ajansy quickly learnt the language of the Petersburgers and went to school again in order to learn everything about water. Ajansy also met a girl in the new city. Soon after there was a dazzling wedding and children arrived: a boy, Shani, and two girls. When Ajansy had learnt everything about water, he got a chance to work in a new country: in the Land of the Rising Sun, where they had mountains and water — an ideal combination. And so Ajansy and his family packed their stuff and trekked eastwards. After a few years the rising sun no longer had any secrets for Ajansy, and he started to look for higher spheres, the Arch-temple of Water, the Holy of Holies for hydrologists. Ajansy was given access to the 'Oracle of Delft'! First he went to that strange Land Under the Sea by himself to check it out, but when he liked what he saw, he was certain that this was where he wanted to live with his family. And so it happened that Ajansy from the Land of the High Mountains arrived in the Land Under the Sea. And he lived long and happily ever after...'

I like this 'fairy tale', written by our good friend René Olthof. The tale indeed sounds pleasant, regardless of the fact that real life is not always a 'fairy tale'. Nonetheless, it can be continued: 'Shani is already about to leave his teenage years!'

As a parent, it is a pleasure to realize that one of your kids has become a full-grown person. My own contribution to the raising of our children (we also have two daughters) has been very small, and the burden of our children's upbringing has been carried almost entirely by my better half, Olga. Our first child, Anish, was born when we were both university students in St. Petersburg.

It was a tough period, as we were young and inexperienced students in a hard-hitting transition period after the collapse of a mighty nation. To put it mildly, life was not easy for us, and obviously it wasn't for our boy either. Looking back on those days, we do not feel any regret, since it was an immense experience that has enriched our life.

It is a great satisfaction and relief for every parent to see their children standing on their own feet. I myself cannot really say much about what I

achieved in my first 20 years. Having been born in Nepal, one of the poorest countries in the World (but also a beautiful country under the Himalayas, including Mount Everest), living in scarcity was a struggle in itself. Nevertheless, I count myself lucky to have felt all the rougher facets of life, side by side with the luminosity of the daylight and the colours, the smiling faces, the emotions, the compassion and the optimism despite the absence of 'material' richess.

A first child is a special sensation for parents. Anish was what seemed to us at the time a normal kid. He used to learn everything rather quickly. He was fond of reading from a very early age, solving difficult puzzles, and was always curious about the things around him.

Having gained further experience with our other kids, we realized that he had some extraordinary aptitudes. He mastered languages remarkably quickly. Having been born in St. Petersburg, Russian is obviously his mother tongue, but during his stay in Nepal (when he was only three-and-a-half years old) he started to speak Nepalese fluently after a mere couple of months. He did the same in Japan, where he attended a regular Japanese school.

Later, he had no problems in the Netherlands either, where he mastered not only Dutch but also English and successfully accomplished the highest level of secondary school last year (by the way, this was the same school in Delft that Jan Timman attended).

Regarding Anish's affinity to chess, it has, in effect, become a major part of his life. When he was five, he was always running around with a chessboard that we had in our home. A chessboard is a very normal commodity in a Russian home. Olga likes to play chess, whereas I am not fond of this mind sport, as I do not like to sit still and think for long periods of time (which is something I already do in my everyday life at work!). Still, while visiting my homeland during my first vacation in Russia back in 1990, I took a nice chess set as a souvenir, which is still in our home in Nepal. This might suggest that I had some hidden empathy for chess. Besides, Olga's father and mine used to play chess as amateur players (my dad was university champion during his studies in India). The reason I am mentioning this is because we have often been asked: 'How come Anish has become a chess grandmaster? Is one of you a chess player?'

Frankly speaking, I missed most of Anish's early chess life, which started when he was six. I had to move to Japan and lived there on my own for more than six months. During this period, Anish was leading an active chess life in St. Petersburg and was developing by leaps and bounds. I still remember that during telephone conversations Olga used to tell me that he was either engrossed in chess books all the time or hanging on the phone playing chess with one of his friends. Then my family joined me in Japan, where we continued to live together. Anish's Russian trainers were rather

disappointed with his absence, and we had to promise them that we would send him to Russia during youth events. He became Russian U-12 champion while living in Japan.

Anish was not a 'computer kid' and never used a computer until he was eight. This was in Japan, after he had mastered how to use my laptop. Our good friends from the Sapporo Chess Club, professor Tohiyuki Nishimori and Akihiro Yamada, gave him the chess-playing program Fritz and informed him of the existence of online chess-playing sites. What I remember is that he was not very much into chess while we were in Japan. He used to play soccer and table tennis regularly with his friends, and there even were times that he did not look at the chessboard or the computer for several days at a stretch. We were also not that serious about his chess activities at that time, although we always tried to explore opportunities for him to play as much as possible.

After we moved to the Netherlands in 2008 he got plenty of opportunities to polish up his ability, score successes in tournaments and, in doing so, make a name for himself in the chess world. Everything happened at a pretty rapid pace. We never thought that he would become one of the youngest grandmasters in the world in such a short period. After realizing all this we started to look at his chess-related activities in a more serious way. However, we did not really have to do anything for this. He was quite self-sufficient and determined already from the age of 10. Nevertheless, as in the case of every parent, we have always considered it important for our son to lead a normal life, regardless of whether he decides to become a professional chess player or go for something else. We never force him to do this, that or the other, but come up with suggestions every now and then, giving our thoughts and opinions 'outside of the chess box', so that he can ponder them and make the right decision by himself.

We are always concerned about how he is growing as a person. We are always glad when we get feedback from the people around him who know him well, his club members and mates, regarding his sociability, sense of humour and positive attitude. It appears that his chess-related activities and his participation in tournaments, particularly in different club events around the world, have helped him to gain additional social and communication skills.

Life is a journey, and there are many interesting things that we might like to do, many ways to serve society, and many ways to achieve self-fulfilment and happiness. Anish still has to learn a lot in the years ahead. Up to now, we are glad that he has many different interests, some related to his chess activities and some beyond. He has managed to round off his secondary education successfully and he can enter university anytime he wishes.

Anish not only likes to play; he also writes about chess with passion. Over

the years he has regularly contributed to various magazines and websites, including his own. Since January 2013 his main platform has been New In Chess. His writings as a contributing editor are not only a contribution to the chess world, they are also a part of his education and will help him in his development. Likewise, this book on his junior years, which will end when he turns 20 on June 28th, serves a dual purpose. Hopefully the reader will enjoy the story of his early life and his comments on the games that he will always remember. At the same time, this book is a perfect opportunity for him to share his thoughts and the experiences associated with his favourite activity, i.e. 'chessing' (as a good friend of ours likes to put it).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone, including our friends and family, who are supporting and helping Anish in one way or another. The kind wishes of others are very important in life, and Anish seems to understand this. Besides, I would like to express my gratitude to our old and new friends from the chess world, who have been helping Anish and all of us. To mention some of them: his first Russian trainers Asya Kovalyova and Sergey Praslov, his trainers Vladimir Chuchelov and Vladimir Tukmakov, our good friends Akihiro Yamada from Hokkaido (Japan), Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam from New In Chess, Jeroen Bosch from the Dutch Chess Federation, Jeroen van den Berg and many others (please forgive me for not mentioning your names!). We are also thankful to our friend Frank Buunk and his family (from Simonis & Buunk) for supporting Anish.

Last but not least, I am very thankful to New In Chess for publishing this account of his junior years.

We wish Anish a very happy and prosperous adulthood!

Sanjay Giri
Rijswijk, June 3, 2014

Introduction

My Early Days

The story goes like this. When I was six, I stumbled upon a new puzzle called chess. After a couple of failed efforts by my mother to teach me the rules, the chessboard went back to its dusty corner. A year later, though, with the help of a book, I managed to learn it anyway.

Whether this is a real memory or something that has settled in my memory thanks to my own interviews, I honestly do not know, but one way or the other, that is how the story goes. The book, by the way, was a great one, and it's still sitting on my book shelf. Its title (in Russian) is 'How to Become a Gentleman'. Skipping the chapters on 'manners', 'self-defence', 'dancing skills' and many others that I should probably start reading now, before it's too late, I quickly found myself in the most peculiar chapter of the book, which I read avidly. To sum up, it may not be clear whether I became a gentleman, but I certainly became a chess player, and that's what this short story is about.

I was fortunate to end up in the right chess club. The little club in the library close to our home was closed for the holidays, so we decided to take a longer trip to a bigger club called DUSSH-2, where my talented friend was studying and practising the game. That talented friend had been playing from his early childhood, and he soon became my main opponent, with whom I played games over the phone. While those phone games usually went badly at first, at the club I won all my games, because I had been put into the wrong group. My mother had modestly claimed that my chess skills largely consisted of 'knowing how the pieces move', despite the fact that by that time I was already a decent opponent for my mother herself.

Winning quickly became a habit, and within a year, although not without the help of my first coach, Kovaleva Asya Vladimirovna, I became a 'first category' player, something I was very proud of back then. The Western European equivalent is an Elo rating of approximately 1700.

My rapid progress was not entirely accidental, of course, as I had already devoured a bunch of good (and bad) books about chess and during that year was completely preoccupied by my new passion.

Japan-Russia-Japan

When I was eight, our whole family moved to Japan, where my father had been offered a job in the field of hydrology (water research). While the Japanese certainly possess all the skills needed to dominate the chess scene, they don't for one simple reason: they have their own version of the game, which is a lot more popular out there. Nevertheless, we managed to find a chess club there as well. At the Sapporo Chess Club, Japanese chess fans,

a total of around 10 people, gathered about once a month. It was definitely not as intense as it used to be back in St. Petersburg. The Japanese chess community was strong enough for me at that point, to put it mildly. I remember losing game after game, waiting for that one 1500 player with whom I could fight on equal terms.

Fortunately for my chess development, we paid occasional long visits to Russia in order to keep up with schooling in both countries. Eventually I unconsciously developed a healthy formula to combine club practice in Russia and Internet chess in Japan. Meanwhile I also had a beautiful hardcover edition of Garry Kasparov's *My Great Predecessors, Part 2*, with his hypnotizing face on the cover, and I can understand why I managed to slowly but steadily raise my level of play.

I have special memories of that book. My Russian coach at that time, Andrei Sergeevich Praslov, picked the second part of the series and sent it to me over the post. I already possessed all the necessary ingredients of a great player, such as general laziness and an incredible passion for chess. Being too impatient to read the book from the beginning till the end, I once again decided to stick to the good old reading method that I had used back then. The method was simple. You open a book at a random page and read that game (without a chessboard, of course; I was too lazy for that too!). Then you do it again and again. The problem with this excellent reading method is that eventually you have seen so many games that you need to re-open the book countless times to end up at a game that you haven't yet seen. As a result. I still don't know whether I have studied all the games of the second part of this great series or just most of them. Still, one way or another, this study definitely contributed to my chess development, and the absence of a board helped my blindfold skills.

My first 'major' victory came in 2004, when I became Hokkaido Champion. The Hokkaido Championship was a closed tournament of six players (if I am not mistaken), the strongest with a rating of approximately 2000. The games of this period have not found their way to a database, and rightly so. I presume that at this point in a player's development it is far more important to know what games he has seen and studied than what kind of games he has played himself.

A year later I also scored some victories in my other homeland, Russia, where I became silver medallist in the category U-12 in 2005 and a year later, in 2006, even managed to win it. The year 2005 is also the year in which some of my games found their way into the Mega Database. I've decided to include two games from that period, both of which feature my cute attempts to emulate the play of two of the great World Champions of the past: Robert Fischer and Garry Kasparov.

In 2005, I also played my first international tournament, the U-12 European Championship. While I didn't make it to the podium, I scored a

few nice attacking victories. I have included two of these spectacular attacking games in the games section. Incidentally, it's quite amusing that in 2009 when, a grandmaster already, I mated my opponent Daan Brandenburg, he told me in surprise that he had never seen me give mate before...

Anyway, in 2005 and 2006 I played both the Russian and the European championships. I couldn't go to the 2006 World Youth Championship in Batumi, for which I had qualified by winning the Russian U-12, on account of the unfortunate political situation between Russia and Georgia. But perhaps it was only for the best, as I was way too young to meet my future girlfriend, who won the U-16 world title that year.

The year after, in 2007, I played some bigger open tournaments in St. Petersburg, and my play got a little bit more mature. I found a typical bad-bishop endgame amongst my old games, which I happily annotated for the games section.

2007 was generally a good year for me. I played well in the Opens and won a lot of rapid events that I was playing every week in a club called Petrogradka. There were rapid events each Saturday and Sunday, the first prize being around 20 euro, which I was happy to fight for.

Moving to the 'Low Countries'

Another year later, it turned out we were going to the Netherlands, where my father had been offered a job, once again in the same field of hydrology. That 'move' turned out to be extremely fortunate for me, as I won the very first Open I played in, Hilversum 2008.

In that tournament I played my first grandmaster, Daniel Fridman, to whom I humbly lost. Eventually I got back on track, drawing with some strong grandmasters. According to an arbiter who was a friend of ours, I seemed to have secured an IM norm going into the last round. I was in bed already when I received a phone call from an apologetic arbiter, who explained that, on reflection, he had realized that if I won my last game (I was paired with the tournament leader, GM Dgebuadze), I would actually make a GM norm. I laughed a little into the phone and went back to sleep without worries.

But I managed to win that game surprisingly smoothly, and this victory was definitely one of my most memorable ones.

It goes without saying that it is included in the games section, although I had to cut down my original analysis somewhat, as my original notes, inspired by my happiness, were far too detailed.

After this victory I played many open events in Holland. Leiden, Bussum and Groningen come to mind, amongst several others. I was quite successful and kept increasing my rating and gaining norms.

I should also mention my 'club career' in Holland. Back in Russia the

chess infrastructure was quite different, but in Europe pretty much every chess player belongs to a club. My first club was the Delft Chess Club which, if I remember correctly, I joined even before my father had found an apartment for our family to stay in (we eventually settled in Rijswijk, a small city just outside Delft). The Delft chess community, although quite small, is very hospitable, and I played a few evening events there besides attending the normal 'Internal' and 'External' competitions of the Dutch chess club system. Those terms sound quite sophisticated, but the system is quite simple: within your club you play the 'Internal' events, and when you go to visit and play another club in the league, it's an 'External' event. I remember having quite a busy schedule and playing some of my 'Internal' games at the most peculiar locations. Once a kind member of the Delft chess club, Joram, took me to his house on his bicycle and even treated me to me a little piano concerto before facing me with the black pieces. Quite awkwardly, I won that game...

Once I had raised my level, I got an invitation to play in the highest division of the Dutch team competition from the club of Den Bosch. This, by the way, also led to a relatively short but very fruitful cooperation with GM Daniel Fridman and IM Jan-Willem de Jong.

To continue the club saga, I have to mention that in 2010 I switched to the team of Hilversum, sponsored by the wealthy chess lover Mr. Van Oosterom (an ex-World Champion in correspondence chess, by the way!). Later, when this successful club unfortunately lost the support of Mr. Van Oosterom, who has done more for Dutch chess than pretty much anyone else, I switched back to my team in Den Bosch. Two years ago, however, a strong new team, En Passant, emerged on the Dutch chess scene, and with them I have now been Dutch Team Champion twice.

Back to 2008

This year I was also invited to play in the German Bundesliga. The invitation came from SK Turm Emsdetten, a club to which I have been faithful to this day. In fact, those weekend games gave me invaluable experience. One of those weekends saw a clear breakthrough for me, as I managed to beat two 2600 players on two consecutive days! This fortunate weekend is annotated in detail in the games section, of course.

I had quite a few bright moments in 2008, but my big hope was to enter the strong C-Group of the Wijk aan Zee tournament. I failed in the online qualifier, losing a dramatic and memorable match to the talented Salgado Lopez. I remember that after two draws in the rapid I ended up losing the first blitz game with white (the position was winning, but...), meaning that in order to stay in the match I had to win the next game with the black pieces. It started off with 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6, and then he struck with

3.cxd5!, the Exchange Slav, known for its drawish tendencies. At this point, tears welled up in my eyes. I knew I wasn't going to make it.

However, due to some lucky circumstances I got invited to the C-tournament anyway, and there things just couldn't have gone any better. In fact, I started with seven draws and a loss, but at some point my family came along and my mother drafted a plan. From the remaining games, 5/6 would be enough, she said. And as if by a miracle I won the next five games. The series started with a remarkable endgame against the highly experienced Ukrainian GM Romanishin, which I have included in the games section.

In the next four games I was no less lucky, and since I managed to exploit all my chances, I found myself scoring my final GM norm with one round to spare! (my second norm I had scored just before this event, in the open tournament in Groningen in December). This made me the youngest GM at the time, which was certainly something I was quite happy about.

Then came the usual Dutch Opens: Bussum, Utrecht, Hilversum, Dieren etc., and a nice Open abroad, the Zurich Jubilee Open.

This one was quite strong, with Morozevich as the top seed. I vividly remember watching the game Sandipan-Morozevich, a typical Sicilian English Attack with opposite castling.

The players entered a crazy time-scramble, and while Sandipan was attacking on the kingside pushing his pawns, Morozevich was attacking on the queenside and doing so a little more effectively than his less famous opponent (although Sandipan Chanda is a very strong Indian GM, who is one of Anand's main seconds these days).

At some point I was so captivated that I started calculating forcing moves for Morozevich. But when Sandipan made his move, something shocking happened. With an absolute poker face, something which I later realized was one of Alexander's trademarks, Morozevich instantaneously advanced his h-pawn: …h7-h6! instead of using some of the 150 seconds left on his clock to play some powerful move on the queenside, a capture or a check.

I found this truly shocking. Unfortunately, this great story doesn't have the appropriate ending. When I came back to my hotel room and checked the game with an engine, it turned out that …h7-h6 in fact threw away a large part of Black's advantage, where the spectacular ♖xc2+! would indeed have been a winner (having said that, in the end 'Moro' won anyway, earning a big round of applause from the spectators). And then, after all the Opens, there came another big closed tournament...

First Dutch Championship, Univé and Remco Heite

By now I had changed over to the Dutch Chess Federation, which gave and is still giving me valuable support stemming from the Dutch Olympic Committee, known in Holland as NOC*NSF.

The 2009 Dutch championship was considerably weaker than normally, as only one top player took part, Sergei Tiviakov. The Russian-Dutch GM, however, got embroiled in some argument with the federation and eventually quit the tournament after a mere three rounds. This must have helped me somewhat, and since I overcame the early leader, Friso Nijboer, I convincingly won the tournament. That game against Nijboer, with whom I had to battle in many Opens in those days, was not only important but also particularly exciting from a chess point of view, which is why I have included it in the games section.

Because of my young age, the Dutch title led to a lot of phone calls and interviews, which was nice, but rather overwhelming as well. I remember that my classmates were quite excited when some big channels came to our school with their cameras. Fortunately, I managed to keep a cool head (or so I tell myself) and went on with my life as it was.

My first 'top' event was the Univé tournament in Hoogeveen. The 'Crown group' traditionally has four strong contenders, and the year 2009 was no exception. I had to do battle with the legendary Vassily Ivanchuk, the no less legendary Judit Polgar and the Russian-Dutch GM Sergei Tiviakov. The tournament was very exciting, but the final standings were a peculiar sight. There had been only one(!) decisive game, Tiviakov-Polgar 1-0, with the result that Sergei took unshared first and Judit Polgar ended last. As for me, I played six hard-fought draws. When I think back to this tournament now, what comes to mind is not only those games, but the highly instructive post-game sessions with these great players.

I will never forget Judit Polgar's How-is-it-possible-I-didn't-beat-this-little-kid?? face or the famous picture of me joining Ivanchuk on the floor in the press room, trying to help him solve a new puzzle that he had received in his mailbox from his 'supplier'.

After Univé my busy schedule continued with the Remco Heite tournament, a minor event in the north of Holland, known for its unique first prize: a horse (no explanation here, to keep the reader intrigued). And once again the Groningen Open, where I didn't do exceptionally well. At the start of the next year, however, a big challenge awaited me.

Wijk aan Zee 'B' and the Club Titles

For Dutch players, every Wijk aan Zee tournament is a big milestone. There is always a lot of attention for this great tradition and if you do well, your result resonates in the press. Around this time I had started working with the (then) coach of the Dutch Federation, Vladimir Chuchelov. Vladimir, a Russian-born trainer, raised my level of preparation to a whole new level and brought some balance and health to my play. His positive influence on my game and on

that of all of his students should not be underestimated.

The Wijk aan Zee B-Group, to which I was fortunate to have been invited, was one of my most memorable tournaments, as I played many games that I am still very proud of. Everything was just going my way; I couldn't have dreamt of more. In the end I won six games, not without luck, lost to the only lady in the tournament (remember the gentleman book?) and finished the sole winner. For understandable reasons, I decided to annotate two of my wins in the games section, one of which features one of the most beautiful positional moves I have ever seen!

This event went really well for me. I remember I had some kind of complicated deal with my friend Robin van Kampen, who I was sharing my room with. The deal included him paying for my dinners, but after I had won three or four 'Game of the Day' prizes, the dinner-bill issue started generating a little more tension... But winning the B-Group meant I had qualified for my first major super tournament: Wijk aan Zee 2011!

The rest of 2010 also brought me some nice results. I became French Team Champion, playing for the team of Chalons. Our team was not too strong, but we had one important asset. On the 'French woman board' (I think it's called something like that, but you get the idea) we had GM Marie Sebag, the strongest French woman, which meant we essentially started every match with 1-0 or sometimes even 2-0. Add to that the lucky Dutch duo, consisting of Loek van Wely and myself on Boards 1 and 2, and it is already less of a mystery why we won the title.

I probably have to explain to confused football fans what the deal is with all those 'leagues' and 'team championships'. While in football one can only play for one club (e.g. either you are in Ajax and play in the Dutch league or you are in Barcelona and you play the Spanish Primera Division), chess players have the good fortune that they can play in all leagues simultaneously.

This state of affairs is obviously welcomed by chess professionals, but funny situations can arise. When it comes to the 'Champions League', in the chess world known as the 'European Club Cup', it often happens that more than one of your teams is playing and then you have to make a choice!

Besides the aforementioned Dutch and the French titles, I have also been fortunate enough to win the Russian league with 'Moscow-64' in the year 2011 and the Spanish league with the team of Sestao in 2012 and 2013. However, my results in the Russian league have been quite poor, so the victory of the team in 2011 can definitely not be 'blamed' on me. In the Spanish league, on the other hand, I have managed to show decent performances for three consecutive years. While in general it is not clear why you play well in one place and badly in another one, in this par-

ticular case it is surprisingly easy to explain. It is obviously the great Spanish jamon with fresh orange juice that leads to such good results!

NH and Olympiad

In 2010 I also played in the Rising Stars vs. Experience in Amsterdam, a Scheveningen team tournament sponsored by Mr. Van Oosterom's Association Max Euwe. The level was as high as possible, with 'experience' being represented by Svidler, Gelfand, Ljubojevic, Nielsen and Van Wely and the 'Rising Stars' including Nakamura and Caruana. The 'Rising Star' with the best score would earn a ticket to the famous Amber Rapid and Blindfold tournament at the Côte d'Azur. I had a fantastic event, and it was only by a miracle that I managed to give away the ticket to 'Amber'. In the penultimate round I failed to convert a totally winning position against Van Wely, and in the final round I lost to Nielsen after a terrible blunder. But even then I still had a chance to win the coveted ticket, as I was to meet Hikaru in a blitz play-off. But it was not meant to be and the ticket to Amber seemed to have just slipped away.

This was also the year that I played my first Olympiad, which was held in Khanty-Mansiysk. Impressed by Mamedyarov, who had won all his games on Board 3 in a previous team event, the Dutch team decided to have their own 'little Mamed' and so, although I was already the second player in Holland rating-wise, I was put at the back of the line-up. This worked out fine, as I won many games, remained undefeated and won the bronze medal on my board. The team did fine too, but somehow we didn't make it to the top 10. But then neither were we really expected to.

Wijk aan Zee 'A'

Like every good year for a Dutch chess player, 2011 started with Wijk aan Zee, and this time, for me, it meant the top group. In the first two rounds I had to pass through the 'Dutch tunnel', playing Erwin L'Ami and Jan Smeets, but at the end of that tunnel, in which I only made two lucky draws, there was 'light'. I was facing the world's number one, Magnus Carlsen, who by now also has become World Champion.

That game is quite memorable and it came as a big shock (with a plus sign). Of course, I couldn't resist including it in the games section. In a nutshell, I won that encounter with black after a blunder from Magnus around move 20. This win actually didn't change the tournament situation all that much. I was still too 'fresh' to really fight for first place and was hovering around 50 per cent.

I had some fighting draws, lost to Nepomniachtchi and Kramnik, and came back immediately the next day with a good win against the Chinese genius Wang Hao. Towards the end of the tournament, however, another big challenge was waiting. Black against the World Champion, the legendary Vishy Anand. It was a big fight, in which I came close to beating the Indian legend.

This game, too, is featured in the games section.

A 50 per cent score in my first major supertournament was definitely a success, and the following year(s) at top level gave me a lot of invaluable experience. Actually, my win against Carlsen brought me more media attention than ever before. The Dutch website chessvibes.com even jokingly dubbed it 'Girimania'. If you are going to make fun of my last name, then I prefer 'Giriminator', invented by the ChessBase guys.

Amber Elite

Even though I had failed to qualify for the famous Amber event, where players compete in a peculiar format, playing both rapid chess and blindfold chess, there was a surprise awaiting for me. I got invited anyway! This was good news, and the event in Monaco, organized by the Association Max Euwe and sponsored by Mr and Mrs van Oosterom, was indeed something out of this world. At the Monte Carlo Bay Hotel, the chess players were treated like superstars, with luxurious conditions and a fantastic atmosphere.

Unfortunately, I wasn't experienced enough yet to match the world's best in rapid and blindfold. I started by spoiling two winning positions against Aronian, which didn't escape the attention of the merciless guest Kortchnoi, who inquired as to how it was possible that I had been born in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) and still played such bad moves?

It was quite funny, but the fight for last place between me and Kramnik(!) was quite fierce. Eventually my 0-2 against Anand in the final round turned out to be decisive. Despite my propping up the table, the event certainly left me with plenty of good memories, and it's a great pity for the chess world that this remarkable tournament is no longer there.

My Biggest Victory and Some Black Strips!

My biggest victory to date in a top tournament came at the end of 2011 and the early days of 2012 in Reggio Emilia. I started with minus-2, but then suddenly the course of the tournament changed. The first game I won was played on New Year's Eve. I managed to beat Fabiano Caruana in my 'pet' Petroff Defence with black! After this game (which is naturally included in the games section), I welcomed the New Year together with my family and all the chess players, including my future girlfriend Sopiko.

When I beat Caruana I didn't yet have any ambitions, but then I met Ivanchuk on the right day. That game was a smooth technical victory and is also annotated in the games section. After this victory I won another two games, as White against Vitiugov and as Black against Nakamura. In the final round, I offered a draw in an overwhelming position against Caruana, which only guaranteed me second place. Fortunately for me, my rival Morozevich lost, and with a +2 score I managed to clinch the unshared

tournament victory. Towards the end I was quite exhausted, but somehow I managed to find some hidden strength to have a nice walk with the winner of the women's event...

This was a very pleasant victory, but instead of an appropriate follow-up, I found myself losing five consecutive games in Wijk aan Zee, which followed right after the Reggio event! There is not much to say about this disappointment.

I tried to recover in the European Individual Championship, but this went even worse: I lost over 20 Elo-points and dropped out of the 2700 club, of which I had felt such an established member only a couple of months earlier. This was a blow to my confidence, only reinforced in the Russian League, where my team didn't feel secure enough to include me in their line-up in most of the games. Fortunately, the Dutch came to the rescue again, and by winning the Dutch championship for the third time (this time with a score of 6/7) I regained the lost rating points and, more importantly, my confidence.

Right after the championship I played in the strong event in Biel, where I once again met Magnus (this time we parted with two draws). In the first round, I beat Alexander Morozevich in a rollercoaster game (see the games section). This was a nice gift in the true meaning of the word. I even managed to take the lead and was close to winning the tournament after beating Bacrot (twice) and Bologan (who had substituted for Morozevich– quite a peculiar story). Unfortunately, I lost my final-round game to Wang Hao, allowing him to claim tournament victory. Nevertheless, +2 was a good result, and I was definitely back in the top 30.

2012-2013

The 2012 Olympiad was held in Istanbul. Unlike in Khanty-Mansiysk, where I was on Board 3, I now was the team leader. Our start was quite 'funny', as I was not able to travel to Istanbul in time due to issues with my passport. Even without me our team is still a decent team, but probably angry about their leader's absence, the Dutch spilled quite some points in the first three rounds. However, once I finally joined them, things went very well. It was not that I was playing so great, but suddenly the whole team started playing with fresh energy.

After winning many matches in a row (we started with some African teams around us, but slowly we climbed up), we finally lost to Armenia. But this was not the end, and by beating Argentina in the final round we finished in the desired Top 6, which yielded us the so-called 'A' status, a designation of the Dutch Olympic Committee that comes with financial support. In fact, it was quite a funny situation. It turned out that my results did not matter at all for the final standing. The points I had contributed did not affect our match points, so we jokingly decided that it had been my spiritual presence that had inspired the team.

In 2013, I was given the opportunity to fight for a spot in the Candi-

dates' tournament, as I was invited to the Grand Prix series and qualified for the World Cup. In both events, two tickets to the Candidates' are to be won, and both tournaments are obviously tough challenges in their own right. My Grand Prix was not a success, to put it straight. I had a minus-score in three legs and a 50 per cent score in the remaining one. This was quite disappointing. The World Cup started quite well for me, as I overcame young GM Salem from the Emirates and then went on to beat the strong Chinese GM Li Chao 2-0 (one of my wins against Li Chao is in the games section). Things were looking rosy, but then I suddenly stumbled in my match against the new revelation of the World Cup, Peru's Julio Granda Zuniga. Julio Granda, a man you should know about (otherwise look up his Wikipedia page; it's quite a story) took a simple approach against me. With white he played h3-g4 in some simple positions, and with black he went …h6-g5... I never quite understood how to meet these peculiar advances. In fact, the evening before the tie-break, I spent some time playing blitz with my second Jan Smeets, who got knocked out in the first round. Jan employed the strategy of Julio Granda, going h3-g4 or …h6-g5, and believe it or not, that blitz session went quite badly for me, too. (In case you are a future opponent and would like to try me with it, I have to warn you that I am probably able to handle this space-gaining advance now.)

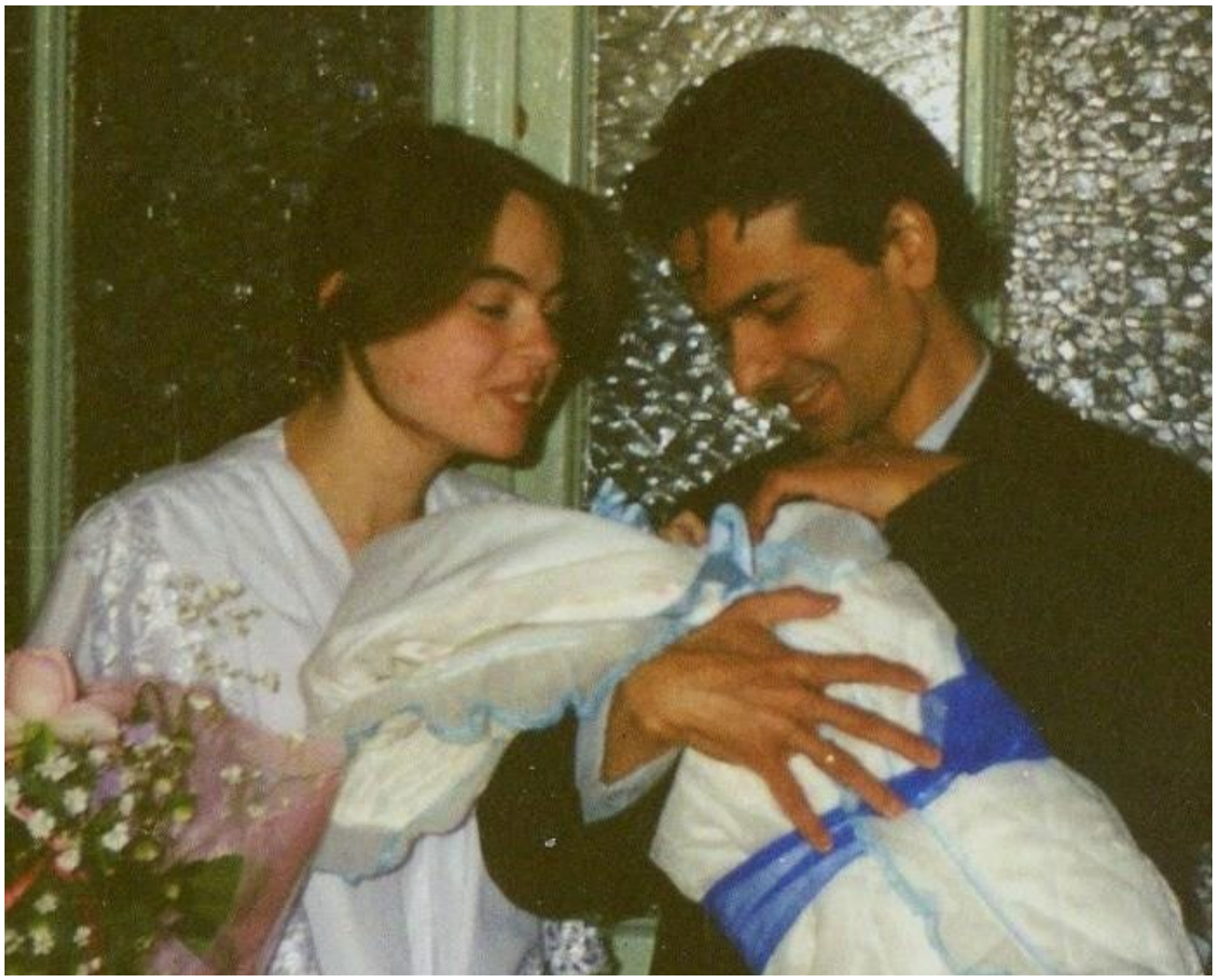
After this big disappointment my fight in the World Championship cycle 2013-2014 ended, but other events continued...

The 20th Year of My Life!

The 2014 Tata Steel tournament in Wijk aan Zee was the first event in which I worked together with Vladimir Tukmakov (for which, I am once again thankful to the Dutch Chess Federation and NOC*NSF...), and things went quite well. I managed to stay undefeated and win two games, which at this level can never be bad. My wins against Harikrishna and Naiditsch were quite satisfying, but many of my draws were interesting as well. I was close to winning against Gelfand (missed a win, in fact) and against Aronian. The last game gave me a scare, but it was a very exciting fight, as always seems to be the case when I am facing Hikaru Nakamura (I have annotated this game for the games section). A plus-2 score was nice, as it yielded me second place (behind Aronian), and the Dutch public was quite happy that their local 'hero' was not being tossed around this time.

So that's where I am now, eager to take on new challenges. A couple of weeks before my 20th birthday on June 28, I was invited to take part in Norway Chess 2014, a fantastic super-tournament to look forward to. Let's see with what feelings I will celebrate the close of my second decade and the end of my junior years. I'm sure that I will be hungry for more!

Anish Giri
Rijswijk, June 1, 2014



Yes, he's really there! Father Sanjay and mother Olga leave the hospital with new-born Anish.

Anish tests his lungs celebrating his second birthday.

Junior days in St. Petersburg.

Ten-year-old Anish with his aunt in St. Petersburg.

The proud Under-12 Russian Champion.

Playing soccer in Japan.

Anish, in a traditional Japanese outfit, takes part in one of the local festivities in Hokkaido.

Skiing in Hokkaido with his mother.

Horse riding in St. Petersburg.

Always eager to learn. Anish prepares the Nepalese dish ‘momo’.

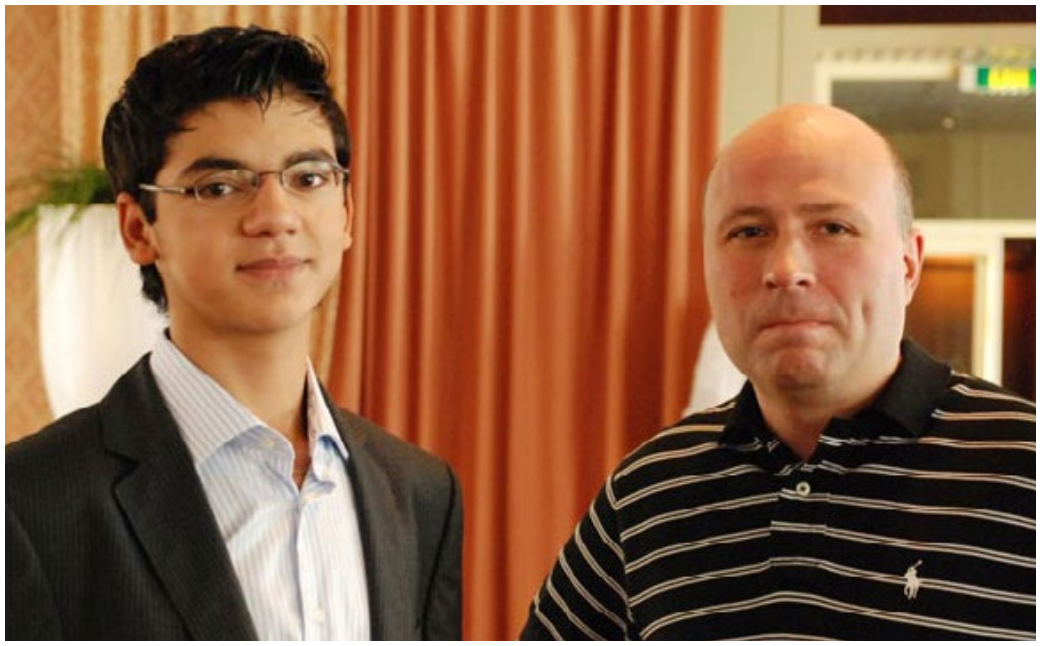
NEW IN CHESS

Wijk aan Zee 2011. Talking to friends before the round. (L. to r.) Arlette van Weersel, Robin van Kampen, Anish and Benjamin Bok.

NEW IN CHESS

The Dutch team at the 2010 Khanty-Mansyisk Olympiad: Jan Smeets, Loek van Wely, Daniel Stellwagen, Anish Giri and Erwin l'Ami (sitting).

Anish's win over Magnus Carlsen in the 2011 Tata Steel tournament in Wijk aan Zee was front-page news in the Dutch press.



NEW IN CHESS

With his trainer Vladimir Chuchelov at the 2010 Rising Stars vs. Experience tournament in Amsterdam.

FRED LUCAS

Magnus Carlsen and Anish Giri (and in the background Tata Steel press chief Tom Bottema) are still ignorant of the fact that this game will only last 22 moves and that Black will win.

NEW IN CHESS

At a relaxed lunch during the last Amber Blindfold and Rapid Tournament in Monaco in 2011, Anish gets some fatherly advice from Levon Aronian.

FRED LUCAS

Monaco 2011. Having fun in the press room with World Champion Vishy Anand.

Hoogeveen 2009. Let's get down to work. Helping Vassily Ivanchuk solve a puzzle during the Univé tournament.

Shaking hands with political commentator Frits Wester at the start of a simul in the Dutch parliament in The Hague.

NEW IN CHESS

FRED LUCAS

That's the way you want to make an appearance at chess tournament. Two hostesses introduce the Dutch representative at the 2012 London Grand Prix.

With his parents and his sisters Natasha and Ayusha in the Keukenhof, the world-famous Dutch tulip gardens in Lisse.

Game collection

1

E70
Vladimir Domnin
Anish Giri
St. Petersburg 2005

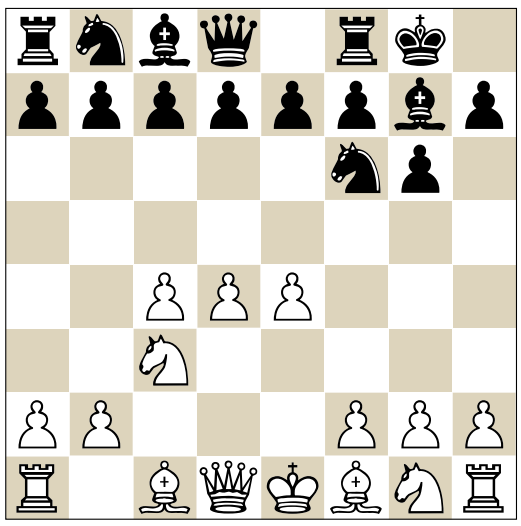
This game was played when I was 10, in one of my first Opens in St. Petersburg in the big club dedicated to the memory of Mikhail Chigorin, which is located in the centre of the city. I have a lot of warm memories connected to this place – I played many great events there and there is a delicious bakery right next to it...

This game is a nice example of my attempts to mimic the 11th World Champion.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7

As a child I was playing the King's Indian a lot, inspired by the games of Kasparov and Fischer.

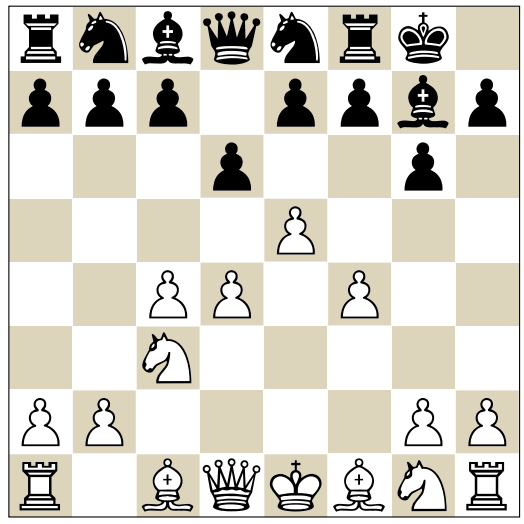
4.e4 0-0 I read somewhere about this trick that Fischer once pulled upon Letelier. Black invites White to gain even more space.



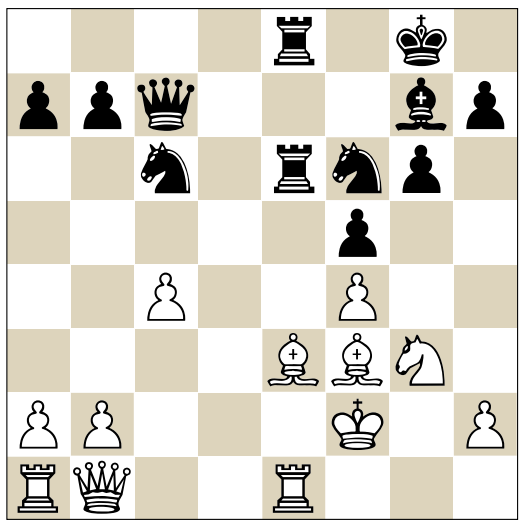
5.e5 It was hard to describe my happiness here. I would have a chance to play like Fischer!

5...♘e8 6.f4 6.♘f3 d6 gives Black good play, in the spirit of the provocative Alekhine Defence (1.e4 ♘f6).

6...d6 Now Black starts to break up the white centre.



7.♘f3 In the afore-mentioned famous game of Robert James, White played 7.♗e3 when Fischer blew up all of White's centre: 7...c5! 8.dxc5 ♘c6!. I was fascinated by this idea. 9.cxd6 exd6 10.♘e4 White is playing very badly, but the way the young Fischer exploits his play is charming. 10...♗f5 11.♘g3 ♗e6 12.♘f3 ♕c7 13.♕b1 dxe5 14.f5 e4!? 15.fxe6 exf3 16.gxf3 f5 17.f4 ♘f6 18.♗e2 ♖fe8 19.♔f2 ♖xe6 20.♖e1 ♖ae8 21.♗f3. And now the Grand Finale.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

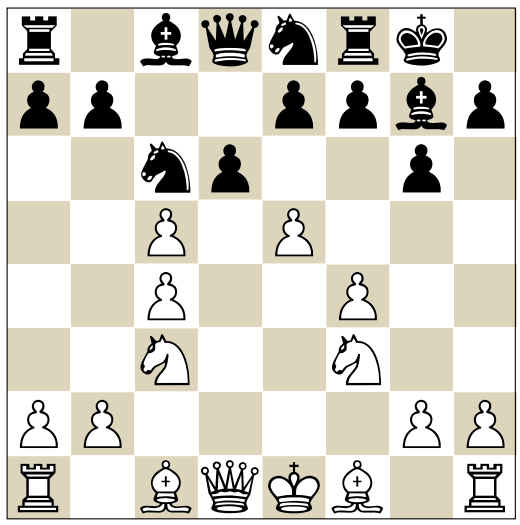
21...♖xe3! 22.♖xe3 ♖xe3 23.♔xe3 ♕xf4+!! 0-1, Letelier-Fischer, Leipzig 1960.

7...c5

I assumed this was what Fischer had played in that famous game, but in this particular position it was also wise to take on e5, when the d1-rook is not connected to the queen:

7...dxe5! 8.fxe5 (8.dxe5 ♕xd1+ 9.♘xd1 f6 is good for Black as 9.♘xd1 was quite awkward) 8...c5 and Black challenges White's centre without sacrificing any pawns.

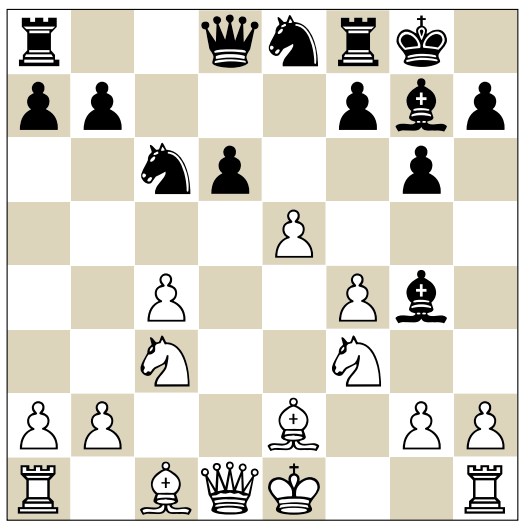
8.dxc5 ♘c6! I knew my classics.



9.cxd6 exd6 Black obviously has excellent compensation here.

10.♗e2 ♗g4

The most natural way of developing the pieces and the initiative.



11.0-0

11.♗e3! was more sophisticated, with the idea to win the exchange after 11...dxe5 12.♕xd8 ♖xd8 13.♗c5 when Black has some compensation, although maybe not entirely sufficient for full equality.

11...dxe5 12.♘d5?

This one is quite awkward.

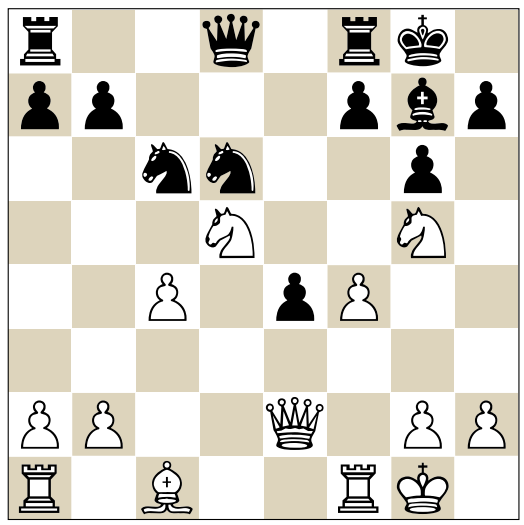
Something primitive like 12.♘xe5 would keep an approximate balance.

12...e4!

Now Black has positional domination without any material deficit. The game concluded nicely, although it wasn't faultless.

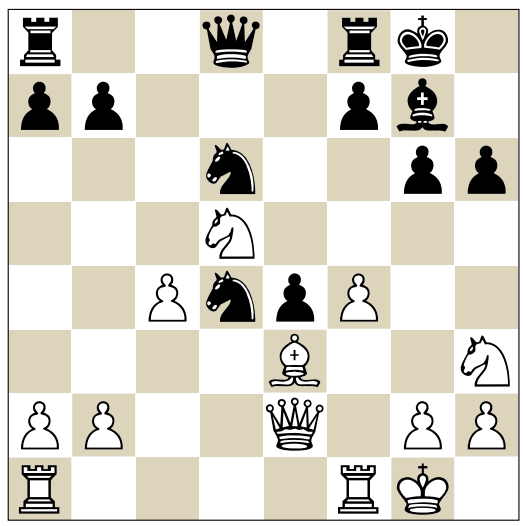
13.♘g5 ♗xe2 14.♕xe2 ♘d6

Getting the pieces into action.



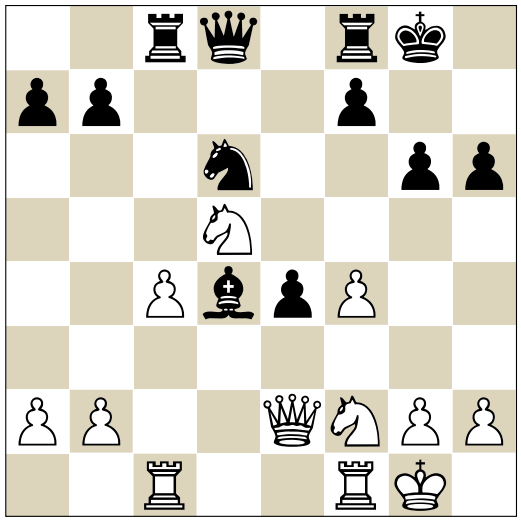
15.♗e3 h6 16.♘h3 ♘d4

Hard to argue with this move either.



But probably after all those wisdom-gaining years I would have gone for the slightly more subtle 16...♘f5!.

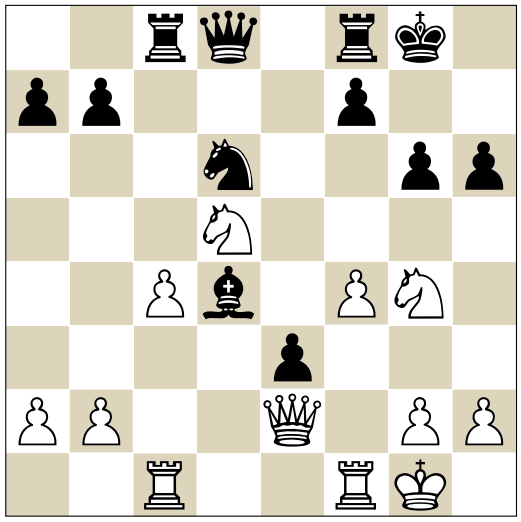
17.♗xd4 ♗xd4+ 18.♘f2 ♖c8 19.♖ac1



19...e3

I decided to start some immediate action.

20.♘g4



20...♘xc4!

This was my great trick.

21.♖xc4??

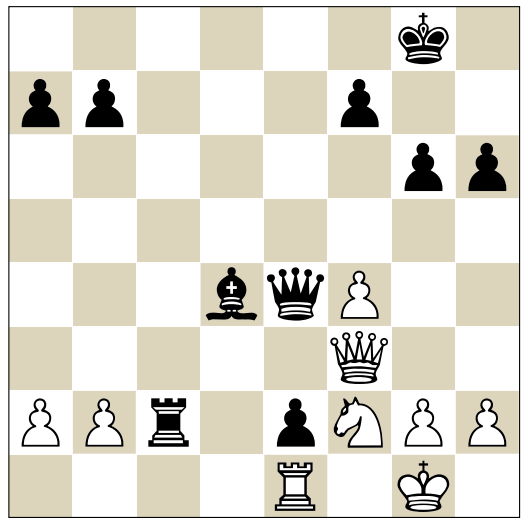
A 10-year-old can afford to miss 21.♖fd1! when Black is lucky to have a draw after 21...♘d2! (21...♕xd5?? 22.♘f6+!) 22.♖xc8 ♕xd5 23.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 24.♘xe3 ♕c5 winning back the exchange.

21...♕xd5

Now Black is a pawn up and has a dominating position to boot.

22.♖xc8 ♖xc8 23.♖d1 ♕e4 24.♖e1 ♖c2 25.♕f3 e2+ 26.♘f2

White is of course dead lost, but back then I had style.



26...♖c1!! 27.♕c3

27.♕xe4 ♖xe1# is quite pretty to my taste.

27...♗xc3 28.♘xe4 ♗d4+

An elegant mate, although I must admit it doesn't match Fischer's.

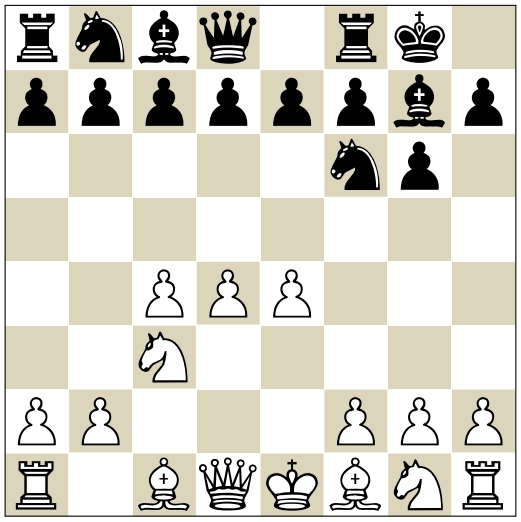
2

E85
Dmitry Kosarev
Anish Giri
St. Petersburg 2005

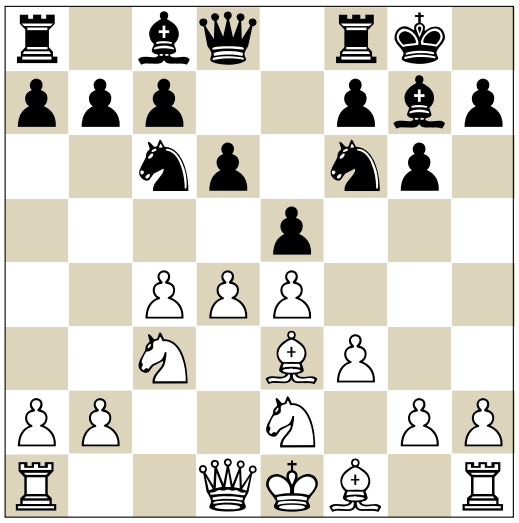
While in the previous game I was trying to impersonate the great Fischer, this time 10-year-old me had a shot at Garry Kasparov...

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 0-0

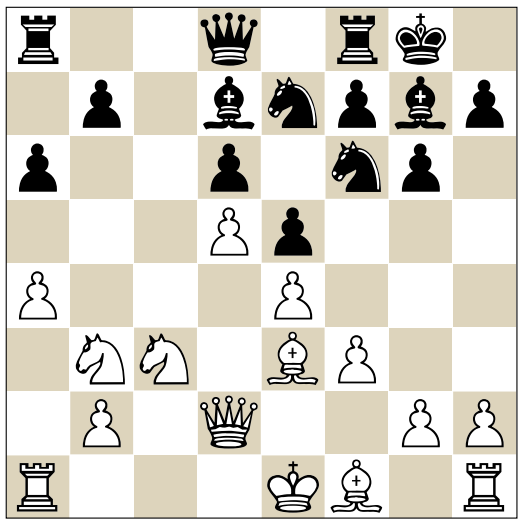
Again giving the opportunity to play 5.e5.



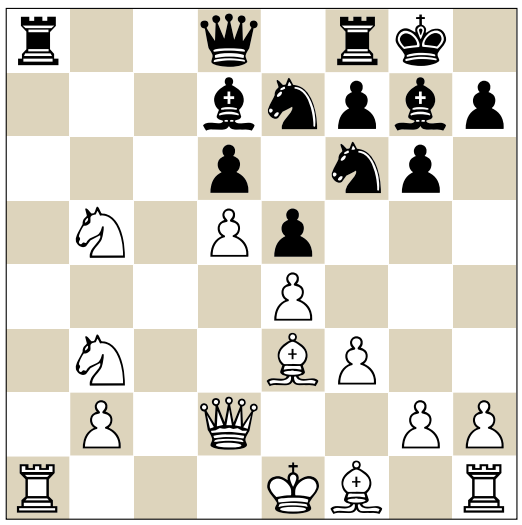
5.♗e3 d6 6.f3 ♘c6 7.♘ge2 e5
Having read Gufeld's famous book and having seen many of Kasparov's games, I knew the tricks of the Sämisch Variation, but for some reason I didn't go for the theoretical 7...a6. It could also be that my memory fails me and that I read the above-mentioned works after this game.



8.d5 ♘e7 9.♕d2 a6
White has many plans (♘g3!?, h4!?, g4!?), but let's not judge my opponent, who was quite a young lad as well.
10.♘c1
This is quite decent: the knight clears the way for the f1-bishop to get into the game.
10...c6 11.♘b3
It was wiser to finish his development first, but White can afford quite a lot, as Black has wasted a lot of moves in the opening as well (♘c6?!-e7).
11...cxd5 12.cxd5 ♗d7 13.a4
So far I have developed quite harmoniously and now in the spirit of the position would be to get the f-pawn rolling with ♘h5. However, I decided to open up the queenside first.



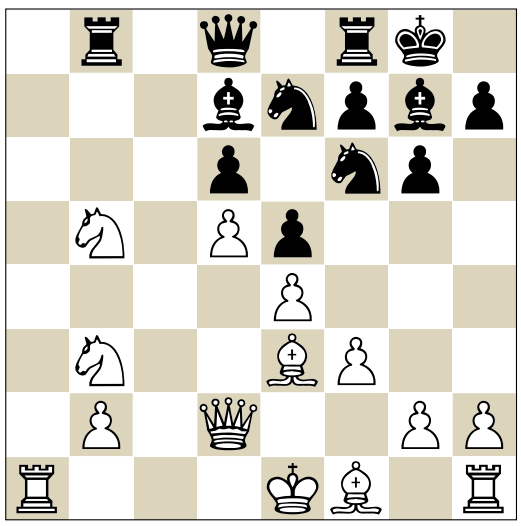
13...b5!? Displaying a heightened sense of dynamics, which must have been caused by an overdose of Kasparov games.
Better was 13...♘h5! 14.♗e2 f5 15.0-0 ♘f4 with a very unclear position. Black has many typical ideas at his disposal. One such is ...g5!?, another ...♔h8-♘g8.
14.axb5 axb5 15.♘xb5?!



Better was 15.♗xb5!. Probably my opponent was worried about the stability of his pieces on the b-file, but in fact it all works out well: 15...♗xb5 (15...♖xa1+ 16.♘xa1 ♕a5 looks tempting, but doesn't bring any dividends: 17.♘b3! ♕b4 18.♗xd7 ♘xd7 19.♘c1 and the pawn remains) 16.♘xb5 ♖b8 17.♕d3!. Protecting both knights. Black has little for the pawn, but can still put up quite some resistance: 17...♕d7 18.♘a3 (18.♘a7!?) 18...♘h5! 19.0-0 ♘f4 with some counterchances.

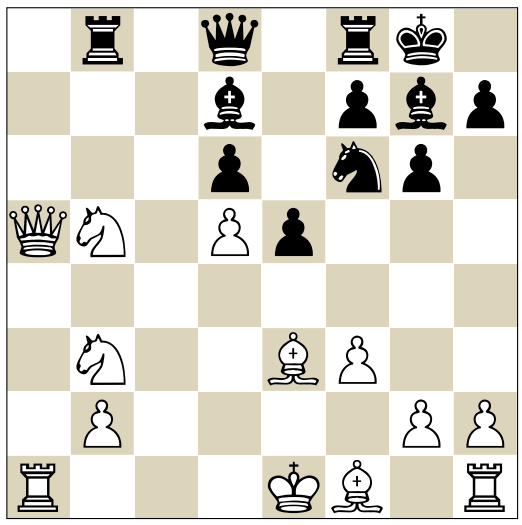
15...♖xa1+?!

Instead, 15...♖b8! would have created more pins and more tension, something which is always nice to have once you are planning to exploit your dynamic potential. In fact there are quite a few dynamic resources in the position, to say the least:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

16.♕a5 (16.♖a5 ♘h5! seems slow for Black, but in fact it's a lot faster than one can imagine: 17.♗c4 (17.♗d3 f5 18.0-0 fxe4 19.fxe4 ♖xf1+ 20.♗xf1 ♘f6! and suddenly White's position is full of weaknesses: 21.♕c2 ♘g4! 22.♗a7 ♗h6! and Black is the one dictating the rules here) 17...♘f5!!. A spectacular shot. The queen says hi to the bishop on c4: 18.♗f2 (18.exf5? ♕h4+!) 18...♗h6! 19.♕c3 ♘h4 and Black has managed to develop a very strong attack) 16...♘exd5! 17.exd5 and now the real point behind Black's last move:

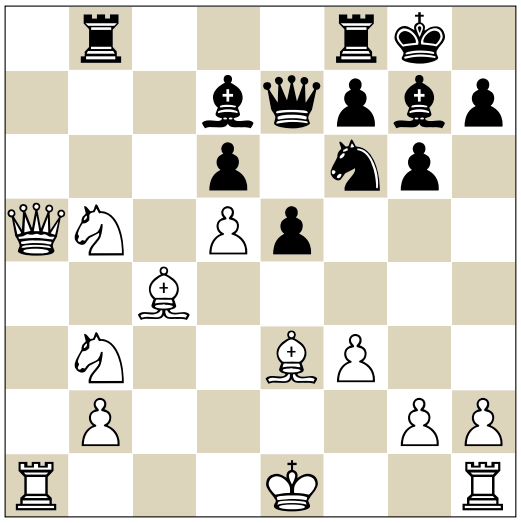


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

17...♕e7?. The black pieces are acting like a mutated hedgehog which soon will turn into an elephant with horns ☺.

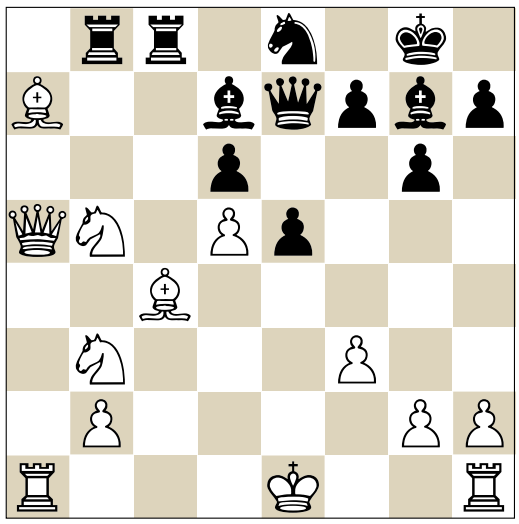
Having read a lot of books of my childhood hero Garry Kasparov, I can bet that he would use a more sophisticated metaphor. His favourite word 'ambush' comes to mind. (The natural 17...♘xd5 is not so stupid either, as White can't exchange the queens without losing back some of the material: 18.♗a7! ♕h4+ (provoking some weaknesses. 18...♕g5!? is also decent, but not enough for full equality: 19.♗xb8 ♕e3+ 20.♗e2 ♖xb8 21.♕a7! when White keeps some edge in the endgame after 21...♕xa7 22.♘xa7! with the witty idea 22...♖xb3 23.♗c4!) 19.g3 ♕f6 20.♘d2 e4! 21.fxe4 and

now there are two moves, 21...♖a8 and 21...♗h6, which add quite some fuel to the fire. Intuitively I'd say that Black has excellent compensation for the piece and the machine confirms that) 18.♗c4!



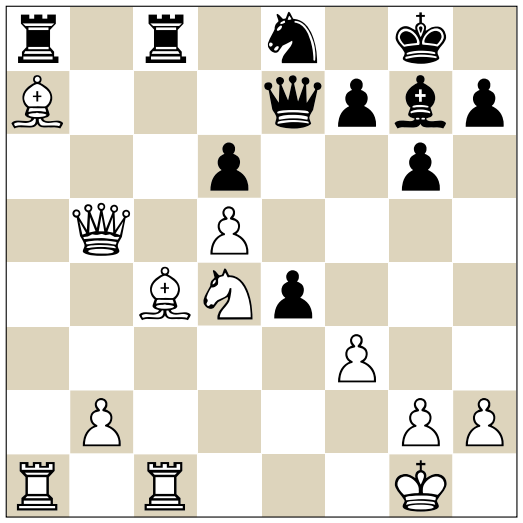
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

18...♖fc8 (18...e4 is the natural way. After toying around with my clever computer I came up with the following variation: 19.0-0 exf3 20.♖xf3 ♘g4 21.♗f4 ♗e5!.
Black is a full piece down, but even so the usual 'laws of nature' of chess still apply. Black is fighting for the dark squares: 22.♖e1 ♕h4 23.♖xe5! (23.♗xe5 dxe5! 24.h3 ♗xb5 25.♗xb5 ♖xb5! and the queen on a5 is overloaded) 23...♘xe5 24.♗xe5 ♕xc4 25.♘xd6 ♕e2!. Now White is quite some material up, but since everything is hanging there is nothing better than: 26.♘xf7!? ♖xf7 27.♖xf7 ♔xf7 28.♗xb8 ♕d1+ 29.♔f2 ♕xb3 30.♗e5 ♕c2+ 31.♔e3 ♕xg2 and White has merely a pawn left, which will be overshadowed here by drawing tendencies) 19.♗a7 ♘e8!!. This is taking the mutated hedgehog/ambush idea a step further, beyond human understanding:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

20.0-0 ♖a8 21.♖fc1 e4!. Eventually this was the idea. Now the position is quite complicated and Black has quite a few threats (...♗xb2, ...exf3, etc). An instructive line would be 22.♘3d4 ♗xb5 23.♕xb5



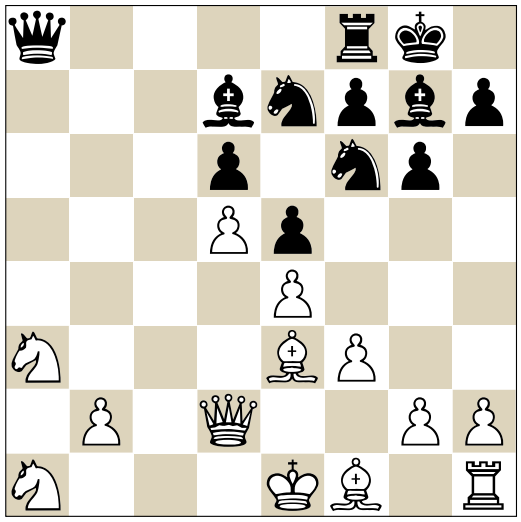
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

23...♕xa7!! (23...♖xa7 24.♘c6!) 24.♖xa7 ♗xd4+ 25.♔f1 ♖xa7 26.fxe4 ♘f6 with fantastic compensation for the material deficit. Of course all those lines have nothing to do with the year 2005 and my 10-year-old self, but that's the beauty of chess: what has been interesting then, is still interesting now, just on a whole different level.

16.♘xa1 ♕a8

16...♕b8!? is also tempting, though after 17.♘c3 there is no spectacular follow-up. Black should try the usual ...♘h5, ...f5 plan.

17.♘a3



17...♖b8

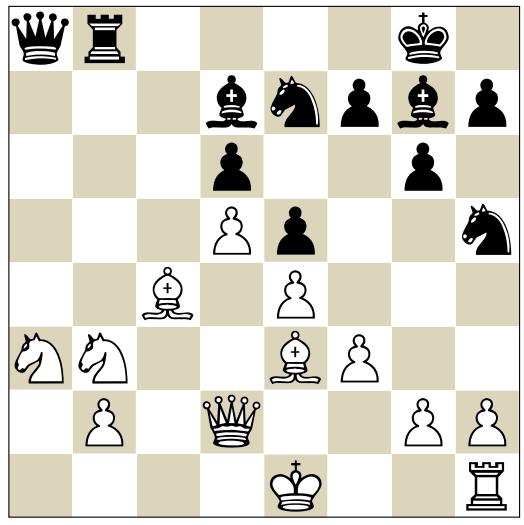
A natural move, getting the rook on the open file. However, I would also have been quite happy with my young self had I played ♘xd5!? here. After 17...♘exd5!? 18.exd5 ♘xd5 gives Black some compensation, though after 19.♘1c2! White seems to be holding on to his material and is ready to develop his f1-bishop. Unfortunately, there is no way here to develop the initiative to such an extent as after 15...♖b8!, but nevertheless the game can continue: 19...e4!? 20.fxe4 ♘xe3 21.♘xe3 ♕xe4 22.♗d3 ♕h4+ 23.g3 ♕f6 24.♖f1 ♕g5 with some chances of survival, after the b2-pawn will fall.

18.♗c4

Stopping the idea of ♘xd5. Now I had to look for some other means of play.

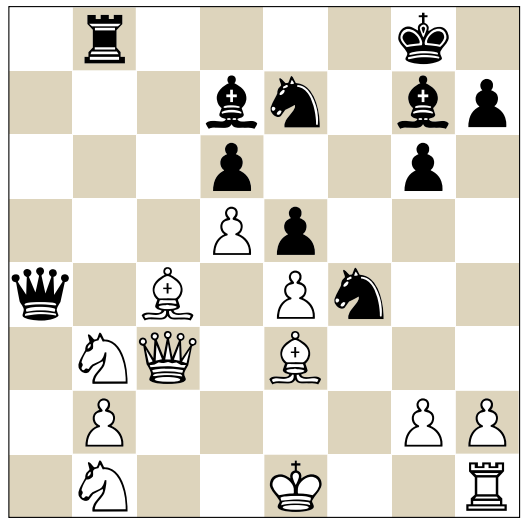
18...♘h5 19.♘b3

Here and on the next move, White should just have castled, when Black doesn't have enough for the pawn, but the game has just started.



19...f5 20.♘b1?! ♕a4 21.♕c3 fxe4 22.fxe4 ♘f4

Now once again, some tricks are in the air.



23.♖g1??

This is too much. White really should have castled, even though the motifs with ...♖c8 and ...♘e2+ seemed quite scary.

So, 23.0-0! ♖c8 and now White has two ways to parry the threats, with 24.♘c5! being the cleanest one. After the capture of the knight, White wins back the piece with d6+ (24.♘1d2!?, sacrificing the queen, was also good: 24...♘e2+ – 24...♗b5!? – 25.♗xe2 ♖xc3 26.bxc3 and after c4-c5 White will be the one having all the fun).

23...♗b5!

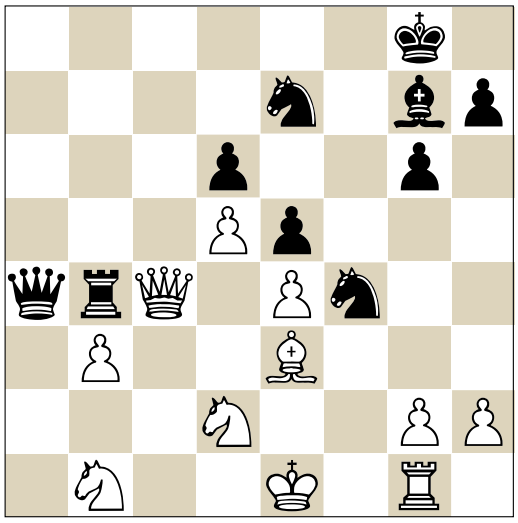
Undermining White's stability on the queenside and in the centre. The c4-bishop was cementing the position.

24.♘3d2 ♗xc4 25.♕xc4 ♖b4

Suddenly White finds himself in trouble.

26.b3

This is what my opponent was counting on. Now after 26...♕a5 White moves the queen and all seems under control, but I had a trick up my sleeve.



26...♕a2!

As it turns out the rook was protected indirectly as well.

26...♕a5? 27.♕c2! is what White must have been hoping for.

27.♕f1

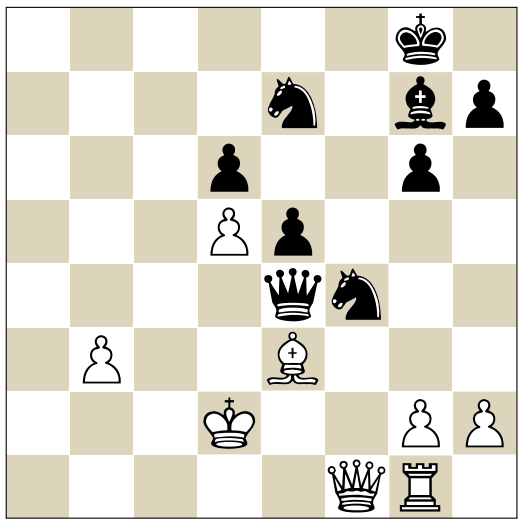
Now it's a matter of a few powerful captures.

27...♖xe4! 28.♘xe4 ♕xb1+ 29.♔d2 ♕b2+ 30.♔e1 ♕b1+

I must have read somewhere that it was cool to repeat moves to gain time. Probably some chapter on Reshevsky or Polugaevsky, the legendary time-trouble guys.

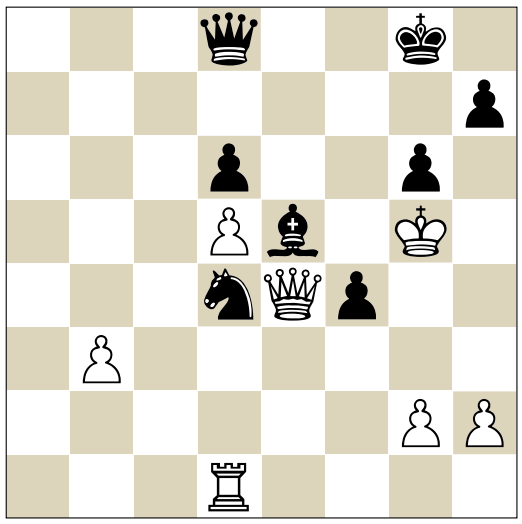
31.♔d2 ♕xe4

Black is material up and keeps the initiative.



32.♗xf4 exf4 33.♕d3 ♕b4+ 34.♔e2 ♕c5 35.♖d1 ♘f5 36.♕e4 ♗e5 37.♔f3 ♘d4+ 38.♔g4 ♕c8+ 39.♔g5 ♕d8+

It's mate in 4. White resigned.



3

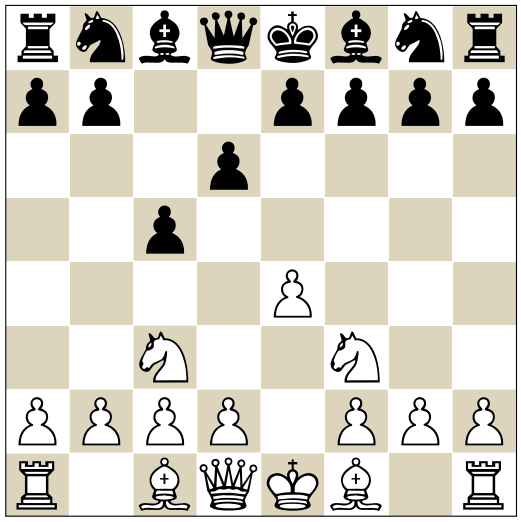
B81
Anish Giri
Shamil Abdullayev
Herceg Novi 2006

I didn't manage to put up a performance worth a medal at the U-12 European Championship in 2006, but I did play quite a few fun games. It is hard to forget the mates that I managed to give in the same varia-

tion of the Sicilian in two consecutive white games!

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♘c3

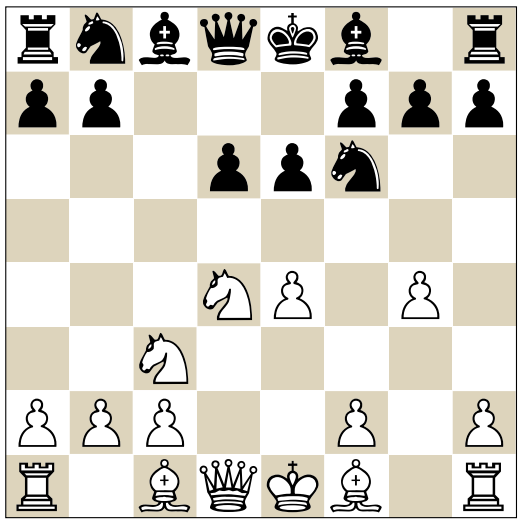
At one of the training sessions for Russian kids, the experienced GM Evgeny Vasiukov came by and gave a lecture on this move order. 3...♘f6 4.e5!? was his point. This led to me winning quite a few blitz games against my friends, but no more than that. It's quite tricky though, if Black doesn't know what he is doing,



3...e6

Instead, 3...♘f6 4.e5 dxe5 5.♘xe5 e6 (5...a6!) 6.♗b5+ ♘bd7 7.d4 leads to a number of pins, so you can understand that a blitz game can easily go wrong for Black.

4.d4 cxd4 5.♘xd4 ♘f6 6.g4



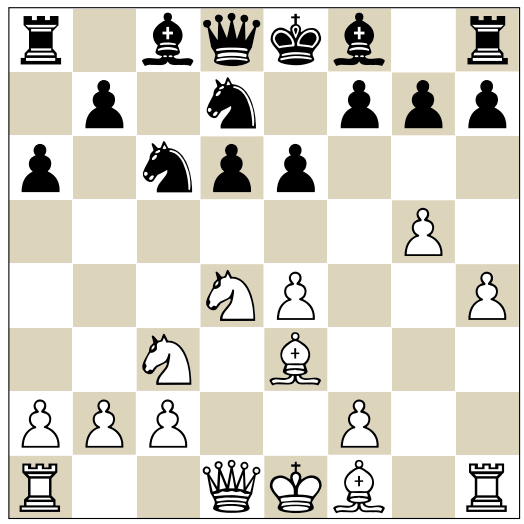
Those days the Eastern kids were playing the Scheveningen, so my coach and I were studying this opening with great dedication during this event.

6...a6

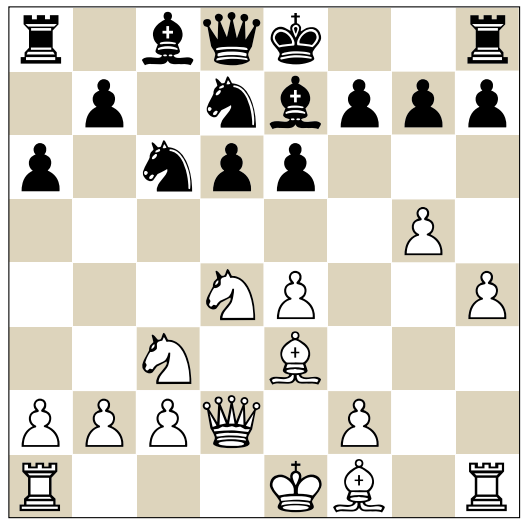
Nowadays this is considered to be dubious. Well, in those days it was dubious as well. It wasn't that long ago, after all...

7.g5 ♘fd7 8.♗e3 ♘c6 9.h4

Recently this position has been debated at the very top-level... but with White being a whole tempo down! The way people reach this position is by playing 6.h3 against the Najdorf. Here, obviously White has pushed his h-pawn in one move.

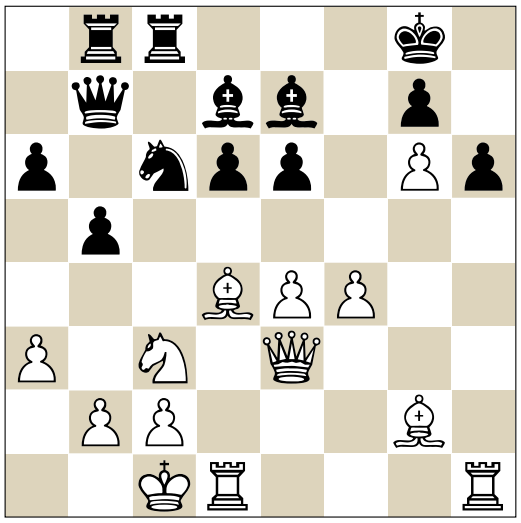


9...♗e7 10.♕d2



10.♕h5!? is an option here, but I decided to stick to the usual set-up. Also, I believe I had prepared something with my coach, Andrei Praslov, an experienced player of IM level, who was guiding me throughout my childhood, so I wasn't exactly improvising yet.

10...♕c7 Two days before this game I had another game which also had a beautiful conclusion: 10...0-0 11.0-0-0 ♘xd4 12.♗xd4 b5 13.a3 ♘e5 14.♕e3 ♘c6 15.♗b6 ♕d7 16.f4 ♖b8 17.♗g2 ♕b7 18.♗d4 ♗d7 19.h5 ♖fc8 20.g6 fxg6 21.hxg6 h6. So far Black had really messed things up, missing a lot of opportunities (basically ...b4! at any point would lead to a killing attack). Anyhow, now it was my turn to strike.



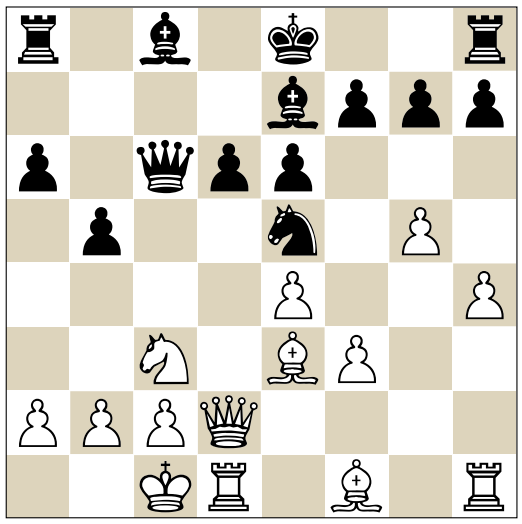
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

22.e5! d5 23.♘xd5! exd5 24.♗xd5+ ♔f8 25.♖xh6! gxh6 26.g7+ ♔xg7 27.♖g1+ and Black has no defence against mate: 27...♗g5 28.fxg5 ♗f5 29.e6+ ♔f8 30.♗c5+ ♔g7 31.♗xc6 ♖xc6 32.♕e5+ 1-0 Giri-Agasaryan, Herceg Novi 2006.

11.0-0-0 b5 12.♘xc6 ♕xc6 13.f3

13.♕d4! looks strong, hitting g7 and protecting against . ..b4: 13...0-0 14.h5 and the attack runs by itself. However, I had some other ideas in mind.

13...♘e5



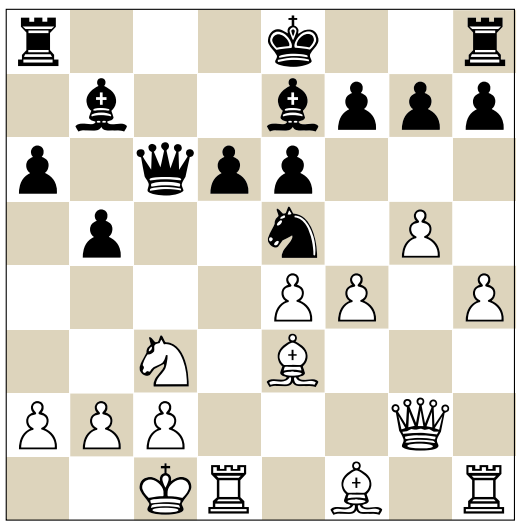
14.♕g2!

I was obsessed with the idea of ♕g2. The queen is so unharmoniously harmonious there, it just fascinated me.

14...♗b7

14...b4! was quite strong: 15.♘e2 ♘c4 16.♗f2 (16.♘d4!? may be objectively best. After 16...♘xe3 17.♘xc6 ♘xg2 18.♗xg2 Black is on the comfortable side of an equal position) 16...e5! followed by ... ♗e6 with excellent play.

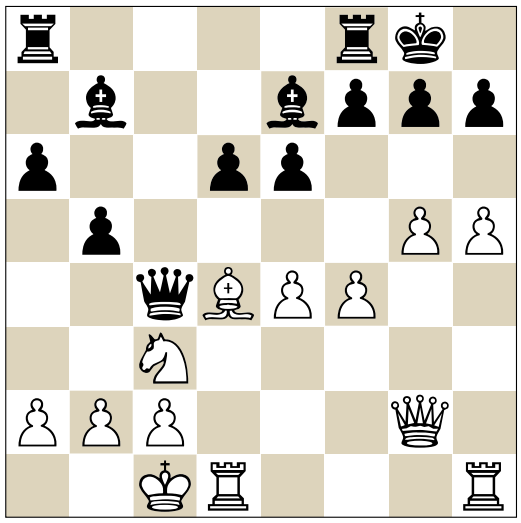
15.f4



15...♘c4

15...♘d7!? is too subtle for U-12.

16.♗xc4 ♕xc4 17.♗d4 0-0 18.h5



18...♖ac8

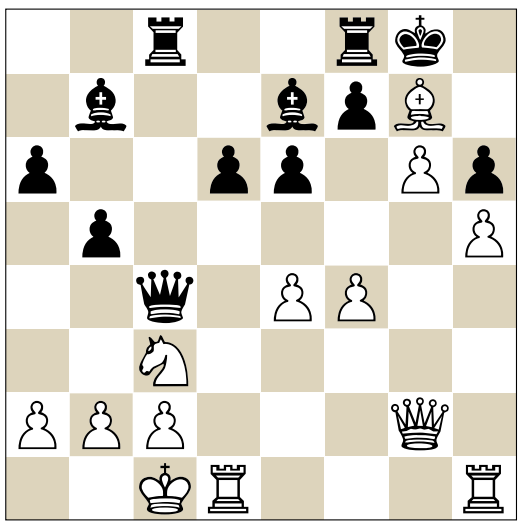
18...b4 can be answered with 19.b3!.

19.g6

I decided it was time for action, once again.

19...h6 20.♗xg7!

I remember my coach was amazed with the defence that Black had here. And indeed it's a nice textbook example of an unexpected defence. Can you find it?



20...f5?

My opponent was too impressed.

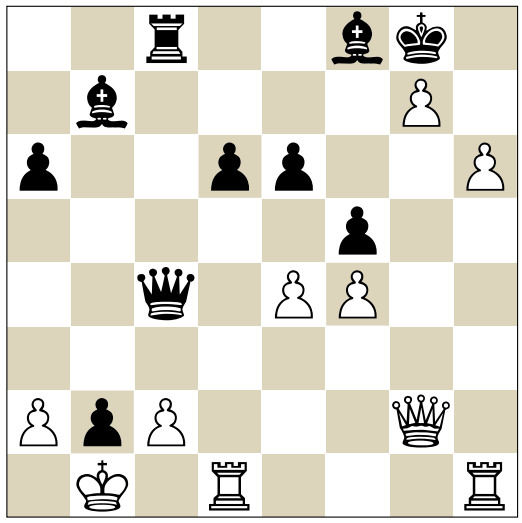
The way to defend was 20...♔xg7! 21.gxf7+ ♔h8! 22.♕g6! (this was obviously my point) 22...♗xe4!! (and unexpectedly the bishop joins the defence) 23.♕xe4 (23.♕xh6+? ♗h7 just wins) 23...♕xe4 24.♘xe4 d5 with equality in the endgame.

21.♗xh6

It's all over now.

21...b4 22.♗xf8 ♗xf8 23.g7 bxc3 24.h6 cxb2+ 25.♔b1

With many mates to follow. Black resigned.



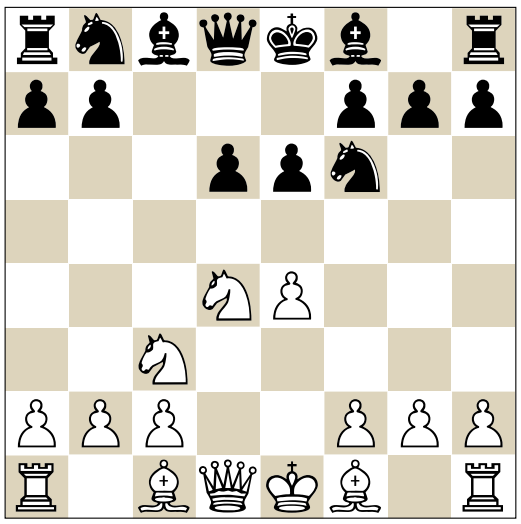
4

B80
Anish Giri
Daan Brandenburg
Dieren 2009

Inspired by my games from the European U-12 Championship in 2006, three years later I managed to achieve a similar victory, this time with the status of a grandmaster.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e6

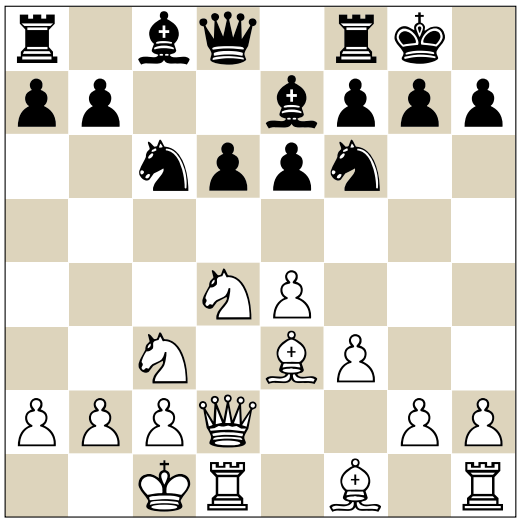
My opponent tried to surprise me, but I didn't mind going back the days of my early childhood...



6.♗e3

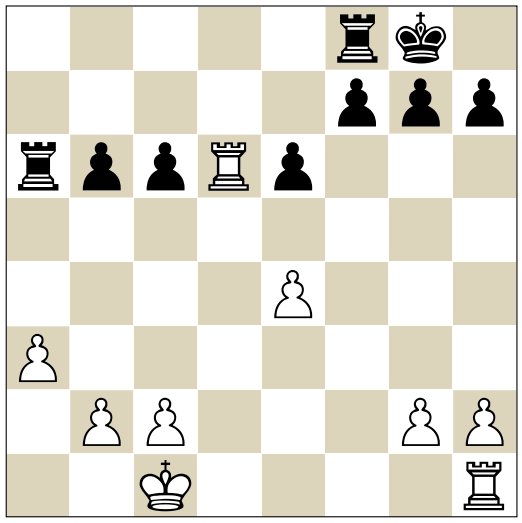
In my old comments (I commented on this game back in 2009 for New In Chess) I said I refrained from 6.g4 because of the variation with 6...e5!?.

6...♗e7 7.f3 ♘c6 8.♕d2 0-0 9.0-0-0



9...a6

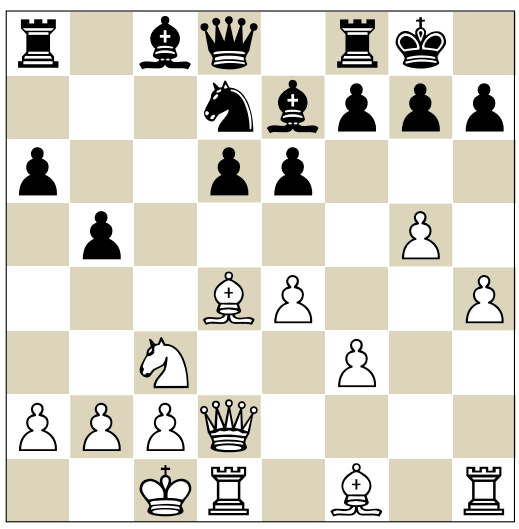
9...d5!? used to be a popular way of attempting to solve Black's opening problems, but I believe that after someone introduced the very cautious looking 10.♗e2, people realized that these problems were far from being solved. One way the game can develop is 10...dxe4 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.♕xd8 ♗xd8 13.♘xe4 ♘xe4 14.fxe4 ♗b6 15.♗xb6 axb6 16.a3 ♗a6 17.♗xa6 ♖xa6 18.♖d6 with a very unpleasant rook endgame that was won by my compatriot in the game Smeets-Ljubojevic, Amsterdam 2009.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

10.g4 ♘d7 11.h4 ♘xd4 12.♗xd4 b5 13.g5

Compared to my games from the European Under 12 Championship, the pawn is already on f3. Which in fact is quite a good place for it anyway.



13...♗b7 Alternatives are 13...♕c7 and 13...♖b8, which is more cautious and anticipates the move a3.

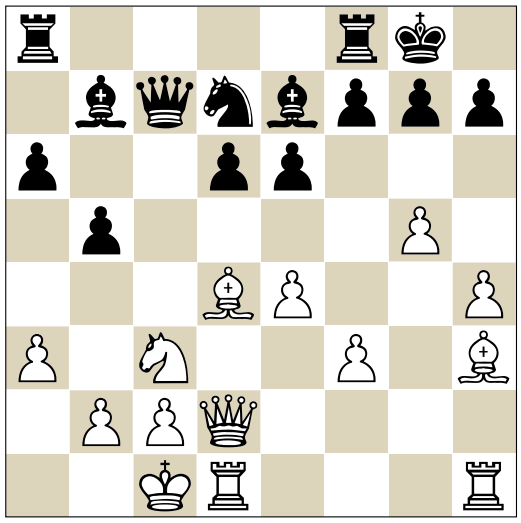
13...b4 14.♘a4 ♗b7 is nicely met with 15.♘b6!, a well-known trick, which apparently I found over the board.

14.a3 This move can only be played once the bishop is on b7, otherwise the ...b4 break is too fast.

14...♕c7 Quite abstract to my taste.

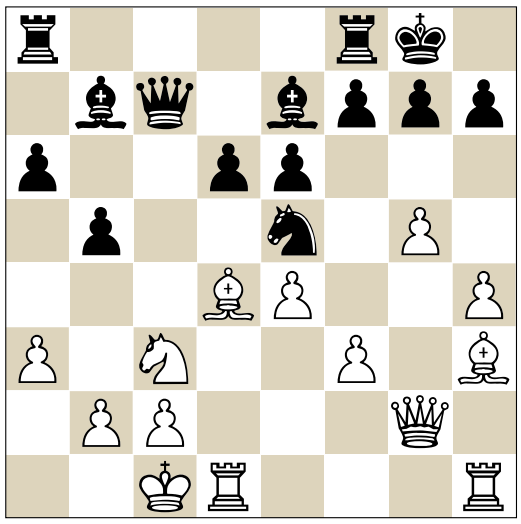
15.♗h3!?

This peculiar move appealed to me.



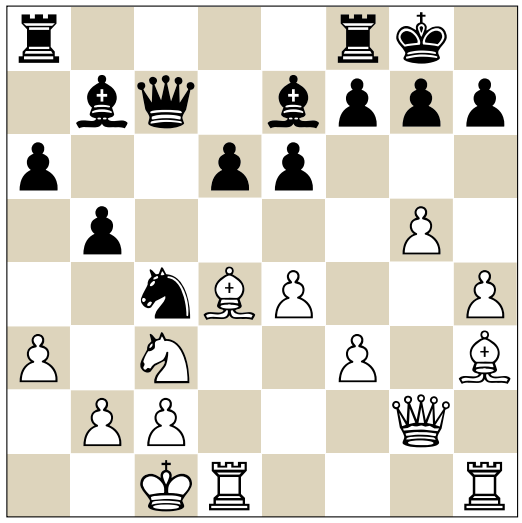
15...♘e5 16.♕g2

In my old comments I said that I wanted to put my queen on g2 for 'some reason'...



16...♘c6? The idea is clear, but it might be a tinge too slow.

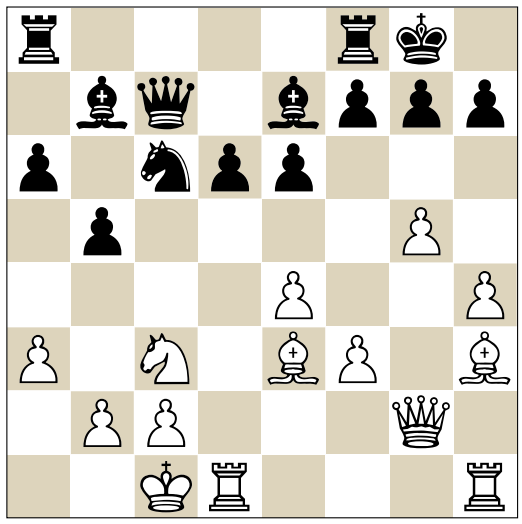
In my earlier comments I was highly impressed by the resource 16...b4!? 17.axb4 a5 18.b5 a4, but by now I know that such attacks don't always lead to success: 19.♔b1! ♕a5 (19...a3 20.b3! and White's king is pretty safe) 20.h5 a3 21.b3 ♖ac8 22.♘a2! is one way traffic. Black doesn't seem to have enough resources for counterplay and after 22...♕xb5 23.f4 he will get steamrolled: 23...♘c6 24.♗c3!. Now the best to me seems 16...♘c4! which can be met with the thematic



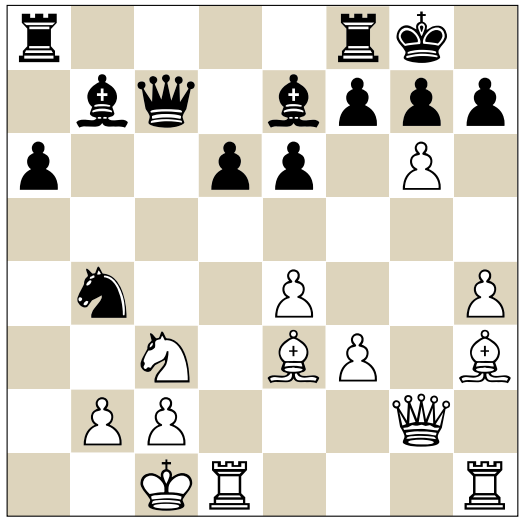
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

17.g6!? when initially I thought White was going to be first, but it doesn't seem so clear after (17.h5 allows 17...e5 followed by ♘xa3! when Black is definitely faster with his attack) 17...hxg6 18.h5 g5 19.h6 e5! 20.hxg7 ♔xg7 and Black's king is feeling quite alright: 21.♗f2 ♖h8!. In fact, Black is simply on top, as White has pretty much run out of attacking resources. Perhaps my ♗h3 idea wasn't so great, after all.

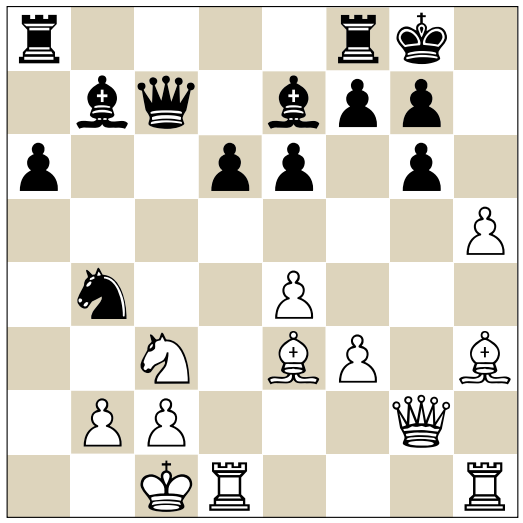
17.♗e3



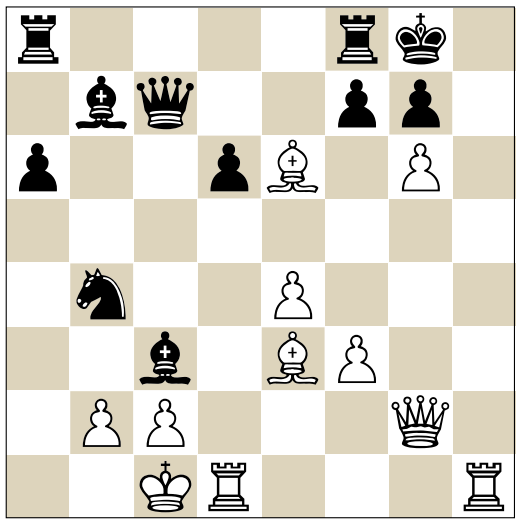
17...b4? Once again, this idea is too slow.
17...♘e5! had to be played, trying to go back to where the knight belongs, on c4: 18.g6!.
And this is going to be a mess as I rightly pointed out in my old comments. White has easier play, but the objective evaluation is less clear.
18.axb4 ♘xb4 19.g6!
The start of the assault. There is no time to waste.



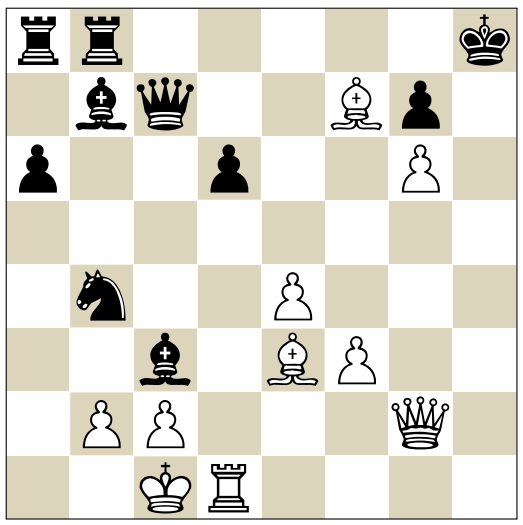
19...hxg6 20.h5



20...♗f6 20...♕a5 was his best chance: 21.hxg6 (21.♔b1? g5! 22.h6 g6! and it doesn't look all that clear) 21...♕a1+ 22.♔d2! (there was tons of analysis on 22.♘b1, but this is a straightforward win) 22...♕xb2 23.♖c1! and White wins: 23...♗f6 24.♘a4! ♕e5 25.♗xe6, with the pretty idea 25...♕xe6 26.♖h8+ ♔xh8 27.♕h2+ ♔g8 28.♕h7 mate. This is a cliché by now, yet every time I see it, it stays beautiful.
On 20...g5 21.♗xg5 is crushing.
21.hxg6 ♗xc3 22.♗xe6!
The threat is obviously ♖h8+. My opponent must have missed this key idea, as otherwise his play seems just too submissive.



22...♖fb8 23.♖h8+ ♔xh8 24.♗xf7
A nice cage there.



24...♗xb2+ 25.♔b1!
And there is no defence against mate along the h-file. Black resigned.

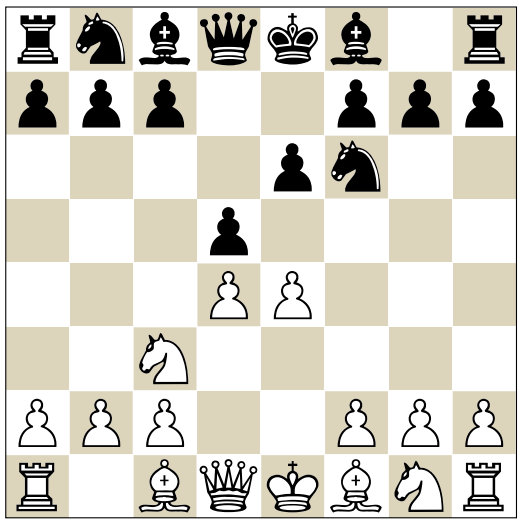
5

C14
Anish Giri
Yury Kudriavtsev
St. Petersburg 2007

As I was getting a little older, I found out it was also possible to win a game without delivering checkmate to your opponent's king in sharp battles.... This game was played in the first round of another Open in St. Petersburg, when I was about to turn 13 years old. My opponent was not a very strong player, but the game in itself is quite instructive.

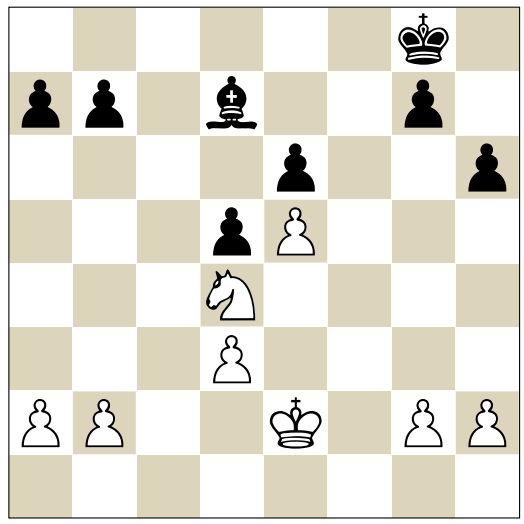
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6

I had read a story about the famous (though perhaps not famous enough) legend Sultan Khan. His story fascinated me and I didn't forget a 'French' endgame that he won against Tartakower in 1931.



4.♗g5

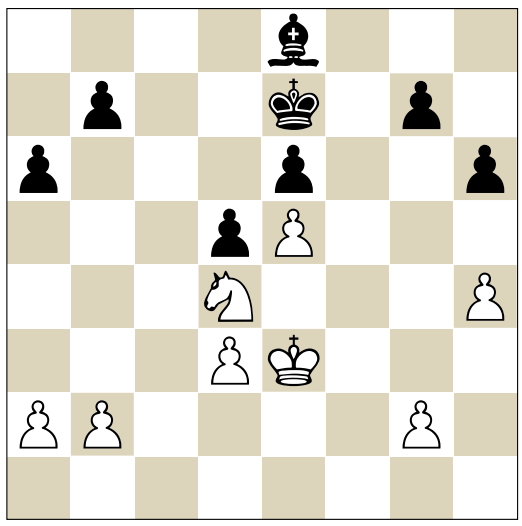
Sultan Khan got the same ending through the other main move. Back then, however, I was employing 4.♗g5 exclusively. Here's the game that inspired me: 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♘e2 cxd4 8.♘exd4 ♘xd4 9.♕xd4 ♗c5 10.♕d3 ♕b6 11.♗e2 f6 12.♕b3 ♗f2+ 13.♔d1 0-0 14.♕xb6 ♗xb6 15.♗d3 ♘c5 16.♖e1 ♗d7 17.♗e3 ♘xd3 18.cxd3 ♗xe3 19.♖xe3 ♖ac8 20.♖c1 fxe5 21.♖xc8 ♗xc8 22.fxe5 ♗d7 23.♔d2 h6 24.♘d4 ♖f2+ 25.♖e2 ♖xe2+ 26.♔xe2



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

26...♔f7 27.♔f3 ♔e7 28.♔e3 ♗e8 29.h4 a6?

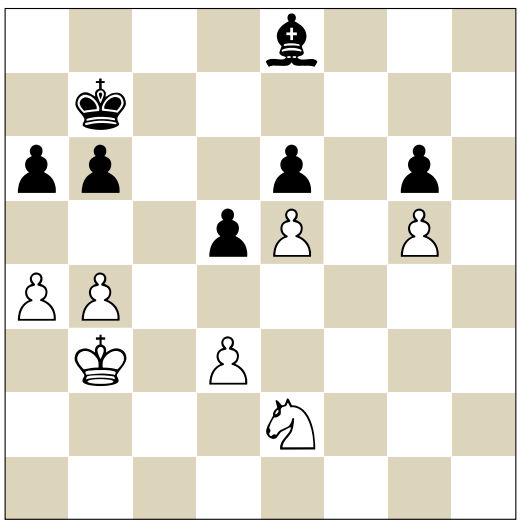
These days such a move will not even be played by a club player.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

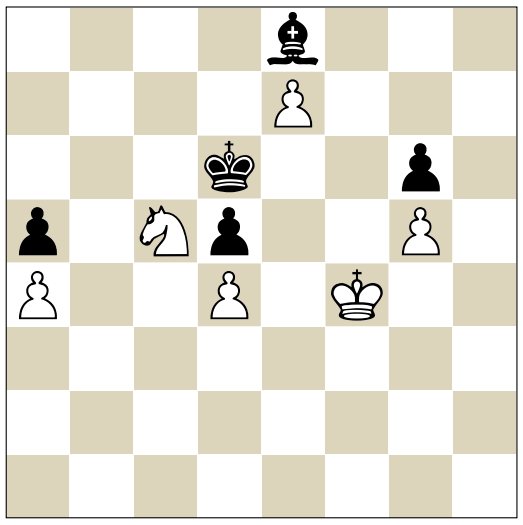
30.b4. All pawns go on the colour opposite that of the bishop. 30...b6 31.a3 ♗a4 32.♔d2 ♗d7 33.♔e3 ♔f7 34.♔f4 ♔e7 35.♘e2 ♗e8 36.♘c3. This allows a resource, which should

not have been allowed: 36...♔f7 (after 36...d4! 37.♘e2 ♗g6 Black has exchanged the d-pawns, but he will still suffer) 37.g4 g6? (this is incredibly cooperative, but then again, back in the days what now seems obvious, was new) 38.♔e3 ♔e7 39.g5!. Slowly, Black has created more and more weaknesses. The position is still hard to crack though. 39...hxg5 40.hxg5 ♔d8 41.♔d4 ♗f7 42.♘e2 ♔c7 43.♔c3 ♗e8 44.♔b3 ♔b7 45.a4!. White needs to create a second front.



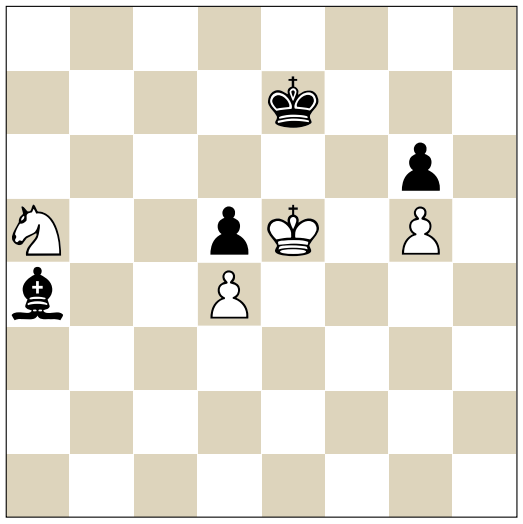
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

45...a5. Allowing White to play a5 was quite sad too. Now Sultan Khan finds a nice regroupment: 46.♘d4 ♗d7 47.♔a3! ♔a6 48.♘b3! ♗c8 (48...axb4+ doesn't help: 49.♔xb4 ♗e8 50.a5 ♔b7 51.axb6 ♔xb6 52.♘c5 ♗f7 53.d4! (due to zugzwang, the king penetrates) 53...♗g8 54.♘d7+ ♔c6 55.♘f6 ♗f7 56.♔a5!) 49.bxa5 bxa5 50.♘c5+ ♔b6 51.d4!. Now Black is not in time to transfer the bishop to f7 to protect both weak pawns. 51...♔c6 52.♘d3 ♗d7 53.♘f4 ♗e8 54.♘xe6. White has won a pawn and the rest is easy, though still quite instructive: 54...♗d7 55.♘c5 ♗e8 56.♔b3 ♔c7 57.♔c3 ♔c6 58.♔d3 ♔c7 59.♔e3 ♔c6 60.♔f4 ♔c7 61.e6 ♔d6 62.e7! (the necessary breakthrough)



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

62...♗c6 63.♘b7+! ♔xe7 64.♘xa5 ♗xa4 65.♔e5. White wins the pawn once again, but this time Black is unable to build a fortress.

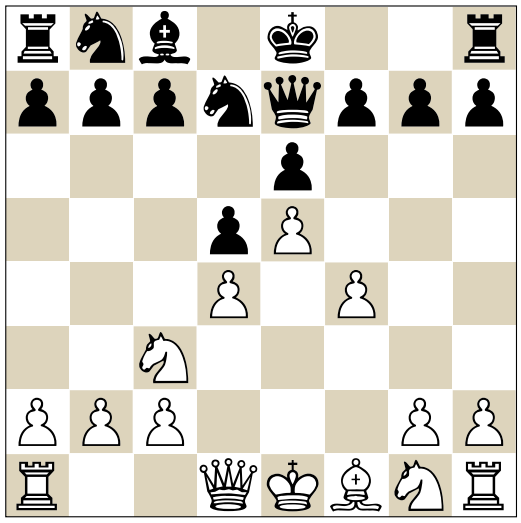


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

65...♗e8 66.♔xd5 ♗a4 67.♔e5 ♗e8 68.d5 ♗a4 69.♘b7 ♗b5 70.♘c5 ♗f1 71.♘e6 ♗b5 72.♘c5 ♗f1 73.♘e4 ♗d3 74.♘f6 ♗b5 75.♘g8+ ♔f7 76.♔d6 ♗a4 77.♘h6+ ♔e8 78.♘g4 ♗c2 79.♘e5 ♗e4 80.♔e6 ♗f5+ 81.♔f6 ♗e4 82.d6 ♗c2 83.d7+ ♔d8 84.♔e6 ♗f5+ 85.♔d6 ♗xd7 86.♘xd7 ♔e8 87.♘e5. Brilliant! 1-0,

Sultan Khan-Tartakower, Semmering 1931.

4...♗e7 5.e5 ♘fd7 6.♗xe7 ♕xe7 7.f4

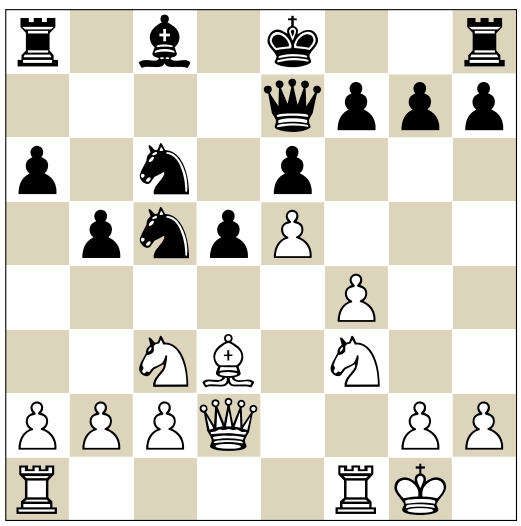


7...a6 This one always made me a little sad, but slowly I got used to it. 7...c5? was a common childhood trap: 8.♘b5!.

8.♘f3 c5 9.dxc5 ♘c6 10.♕d2 ♘xc5 11.♗d3 b5

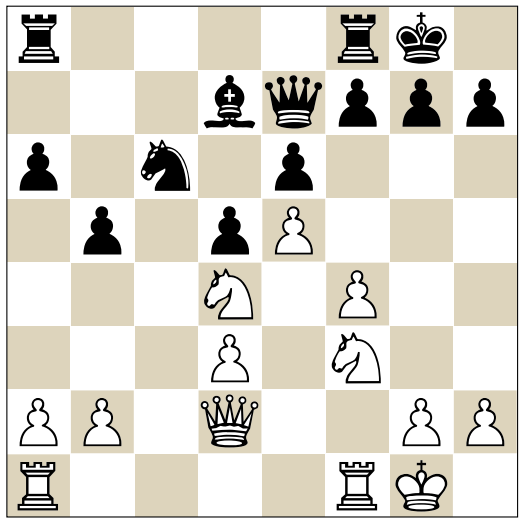
11...0-0 12.0-0 f5!? was played in some high-level games of the past, amongst others Hjartarson-Seirawan, World Cup 1991.

12.0-0

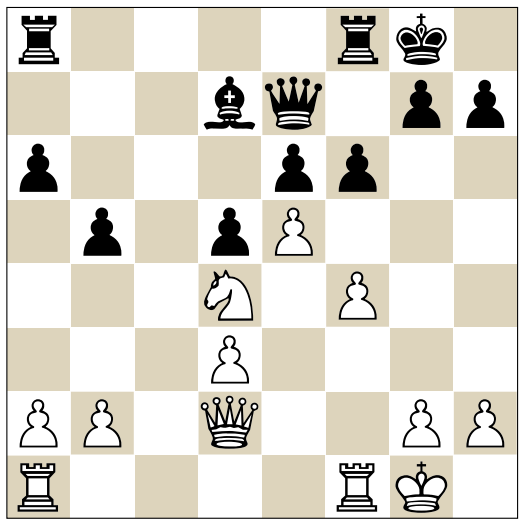


12...♘xd3? Too cooperative. Black should keep some pieces for counterplay. One plan is ...b4-a5, advancing the queenside pawns and creating some air for the c8-bishop. Another way of playing is 12...0-0 followed by ...f5, trying to avoid the bind, as in the comments to 11...0-0.

13.cxd3 0-0 14.♘e2 ♗d7 15.♘ed4 Essentially I wanted to exchange all the pieces except for the knight and the d7-bishop.

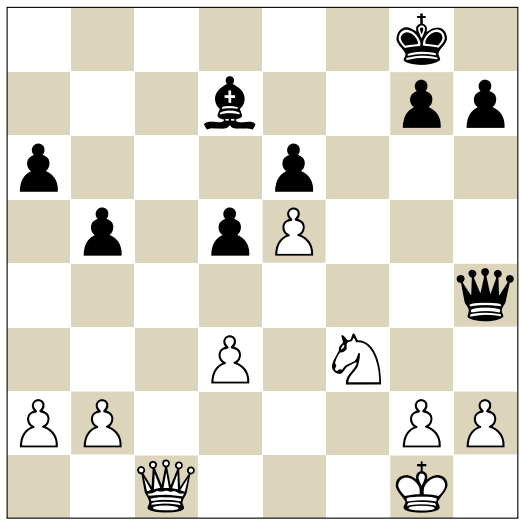


15...♘xd4 16.♘xd4 f6 Trying to create some counterplay, but White is too much in control.

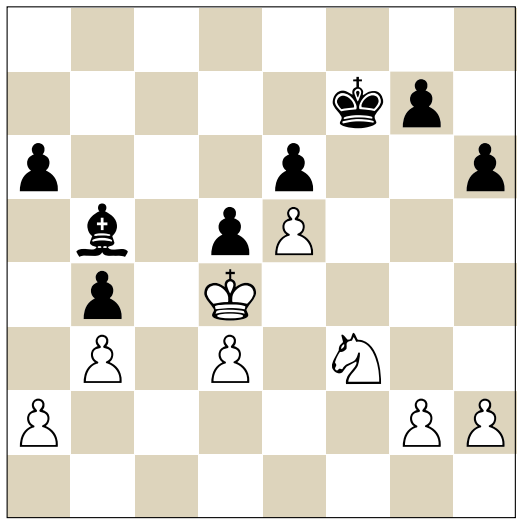


17.♖ac1 ♖ac8 18.♖xc8 ♖xc8 19.♖c1 As I said, I didn't mind the rooks coming off the board. The bad bishop will stay bad.

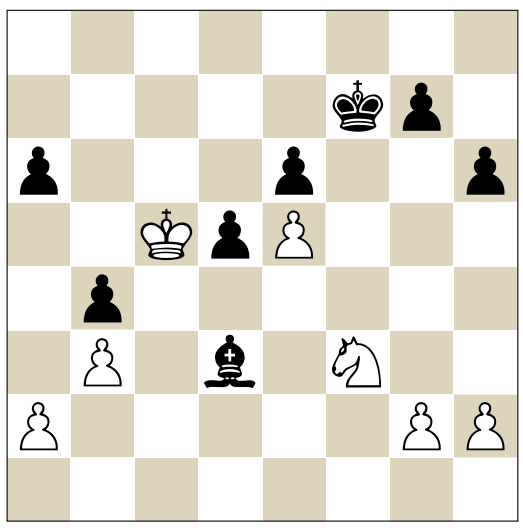
19...♖xc1+ 20.♕xc1 fxe5 21.fxe5 ♕h4 22.♘f3! Rightly judging that the activation of the black queen leads nowhere.



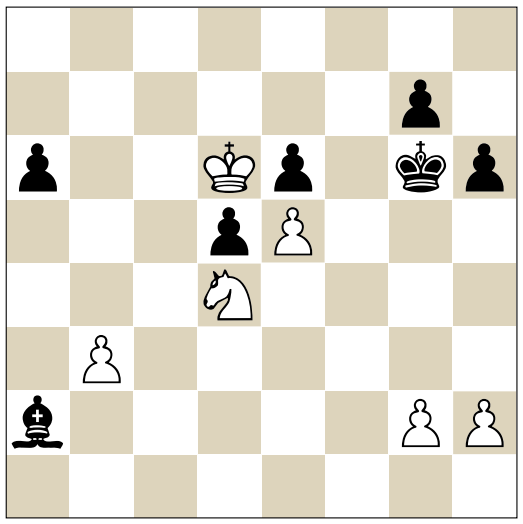
22...♕a4 23.♕c7!
The black queen got too active, so mine had to do its job as well.
23...b4 24.b3 ♕c6 25.♕xc6!
The endgame is the easiest. The rest of the game is a nice technical display. **25...♗xc6 26.♔f2 h6 27.♔e3 ♔f7 28.♔d4 ♗b5**



29.♔c5! White doesn't need the d3-pawn. **29...♗xd3**



30.♘d4! 30.♔xb4 ♗e4!? complicates the task, but after 31.♘d4 ♗xg2 32.♔c5 White's domination should prevail.
30...♗b1 31.♔xb4 ♗xa2 32.♔c5! Keeping the king closer to the centre. There is no hurry to win back the pawn.
32.♔a5 ♔g6 33.♔xa6 ♗xb3 34.♘xb3 ♔f5 complicates matters.
32...♔g6 32...a5! was the best chance, going into desperado mode: 33.♔b5 ♔g6 34.♔xa5 ♗xb3! 35.♘xb3 (35.♔b4? is beauty for the sake of beauty and is a little too much: 35...♗c4 36.♔c5 ♔g5! 37.g3 ♔g4! with counterplay that is enough for a draw) 35...♔f5 36.♔b4 ♔xe5 37.♔c3 ♔e4 38.♔d2! and White is in time to prevent the complications and should win this endgame in the long run.
32...♔e7 33.♔b6! is quite obvious.
33.♔d6 Black's position is hopeless. The knight on d4 has everything under control.



33...♔f7 Black is not in time after 33...a5 34.♔xe6 ♗xb3 35.♘xb3 a4, for example: 36.♘d4 a3 37.♔xd5 a2 38.♘c2 and the e-pawn runs, until it will be zugzwang.

34.b4! ♗c4 35.♘xe6 g5 36.♘d4 The rest is elementary. **36...♔e8 37.e6 ♔d8 38.e7+ ♔e8 39.♘e6 ♗b5 40.♘c7+** Black resigned. A sweet technical victory.

6

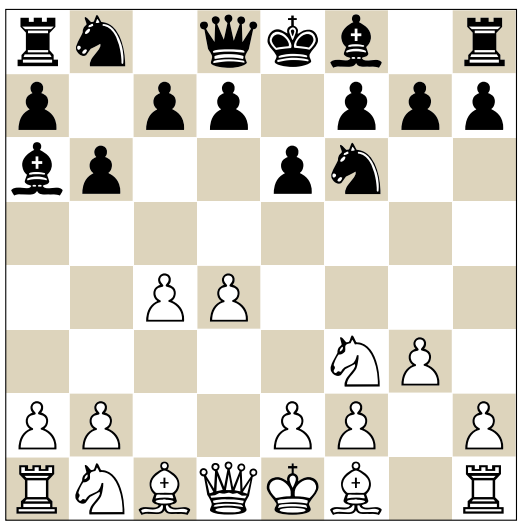
E15
Anish Giri
Alexandre Dgebuadze
Hilversum 2008

This was my first win against a grandmaster. At the same time it was my first serious tournament in Holland. In fact, it was there that I played my first game against a grandmaster at all! The game was played in the last round and there was not too much I was hoping for. I had already scored an IM norm, which I was very happy about, and I wasn't too thrilled to hear that I even had some GM norm chances. At the end of the day you can't get *that* lucky, can you?

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6

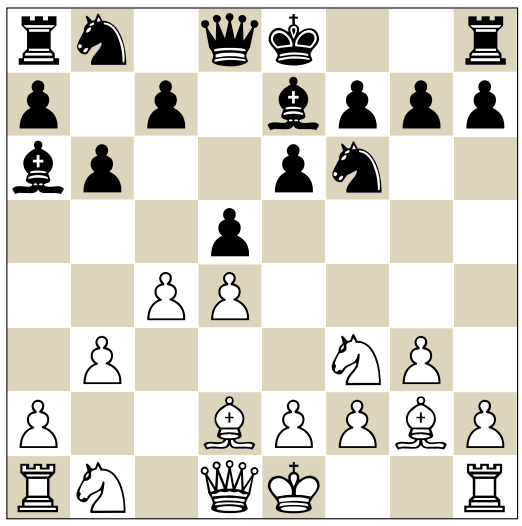
I didn't particularly expect a Queen's Indian, but anyway, I knew some ideas there.

4.g3 ♗a6



5.b3 This is the main line. Now people also play 5.♕c2!? a lot.

5...♗b4+ 6.♗d2 ♗e7 7.♗g2 d5

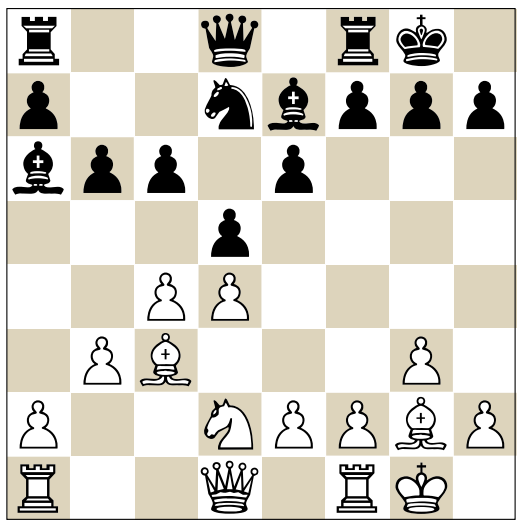


Not the usual move order, which starts with 7...c6.

8.0-0!? Transposing to the main line. 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♘c3 0-0 10.0-0 ♗b7 11.♕c2 is another popular line.

8...c6 9.♘e5 ♘fd7 10.♘xd7 ♘xd7 11.♗c3 0-0 12.♘d2

This is the main position of the whole line.



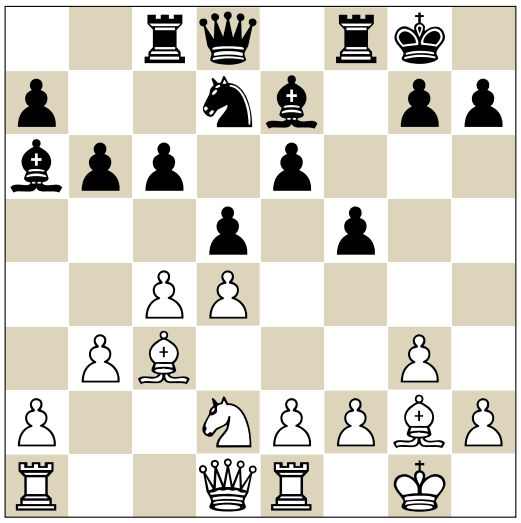
12...f5!?

Not the most popular, but an aggressive choice. I didn't actually know how White can get anything special after 12...♖c8, but at least I knew that I could press there without risk. This

was, of course, what I wanted and what my opponent wanted to avoid.

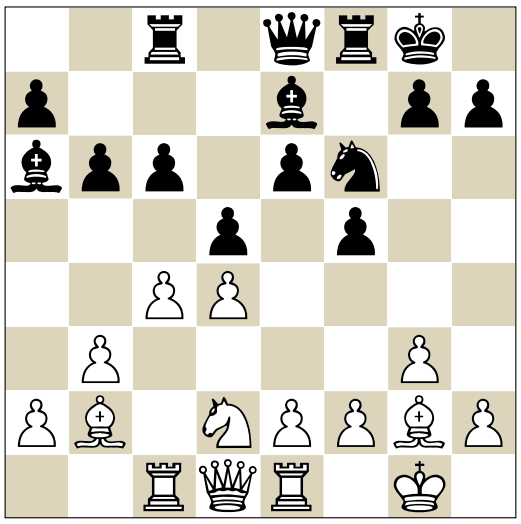
13.♖e1 Another interesting plan is 13.a4. White wants to open the a-file or shut in the bishop with 14.a5 b5!? 15.c5, after which Black can sacrifice a pawn with 15...b4!? opening up his bishop: 13...♘f6 14.a5 b5 (14...♗d6 might be better and was the choice of Hou Yifan in one of her games) 15.c5 b4 is what I mean.

13...♖c8



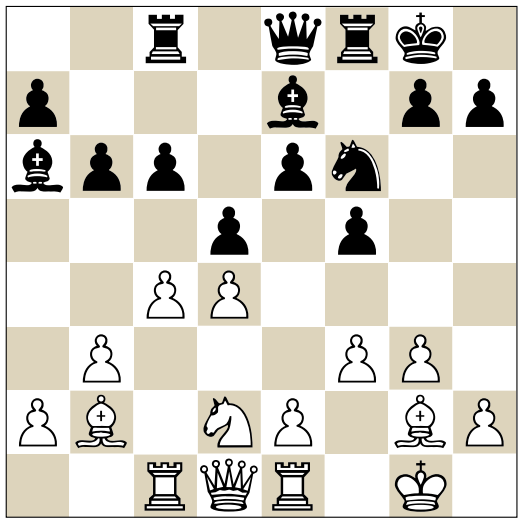
14.♖c1 14.a4 is still possible.

14...♘f6 15.♗b2 A good prophylactic move. **15...♕e8** This was a novelty, but a logical one.



15...♗d6 is good and also typical for this variation.

16.f3 Objectively, this move is not so great, but it gives White an opportunity to play actively and I don't have to look for a plan anymore, as e4! is my plan now.



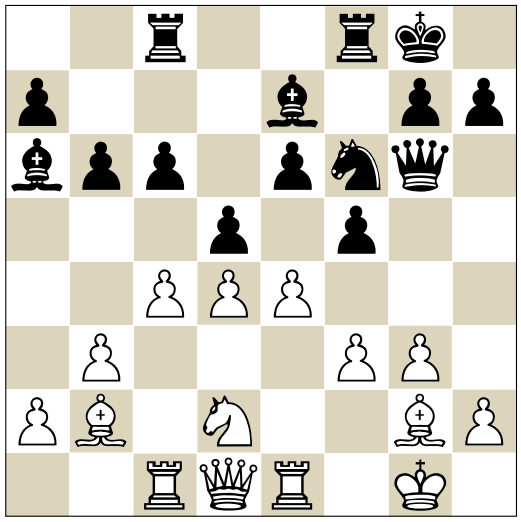
16.e3 was a safer choice: 16...♗d6 and actually I don't like White's position that much. I couldn't find a clear plan: 17.♖c2!? (trying to double on the c-file) 17...♖f7! 18.♕c1 ♖fc7 and Black is OK, as 19.♗a3 is answered by 19...c5! and Black is not worse here, possibly even slightly better.

16...♕g6

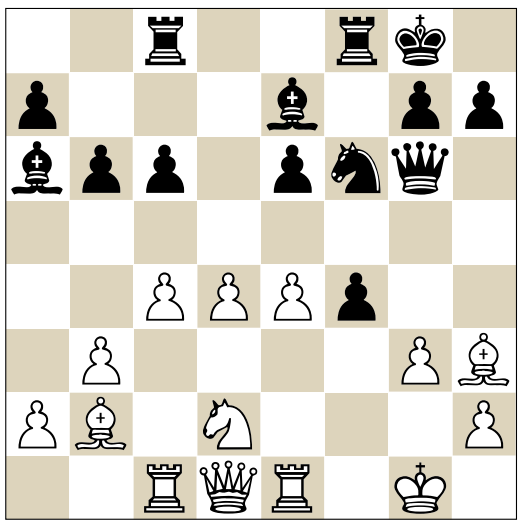
The most logical and I think the best. 16...♕f7, trying to prevent e4, was also possible: 17.e4!? (or 17.e3, slowly improving first and keeping e4 for later) 17...fxe4 18.fxe4 dxe4 19.♔h1! with unclear, balanced play.

17.e4!? I was also thinking about e3, but then I decided to play sharply. Probably, 17.e3 was worse: 17...♗d6 18.a3!? (preparing b4 and hoping for some counterplay on the queenside) 18...h5!? (18...♖c7 19.b4 and White has some play on the queenside. The position is about equal) 19.f4 (less good looks aiming for counterplay with 19.c5!? ♗e7 20.f4 ♘e4 21.♘xe4 fxe4 22.♗h3 ♗d3 and Black is slightly better) 19...h4 20.gxh4 ♕h6 21.c5 ♗e7!? (also

totally unclear – but about equal to my mind – is 21...♗b8 22.♘f3) 22.b4 and the position is unclear.



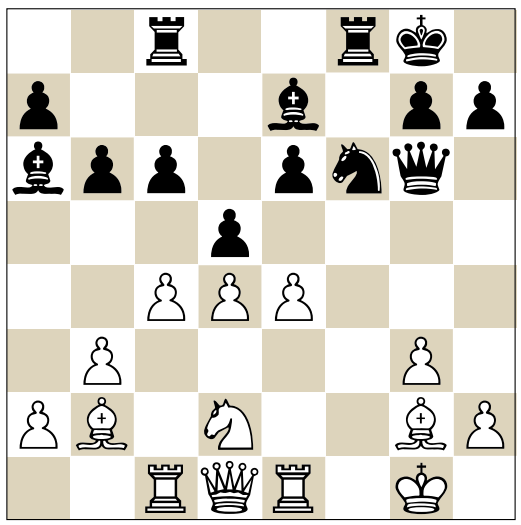
17...fxe4 This was a very pleasant surprise for me, as everything I calculated was connected with the idea 17...f4!. The text move is in fact very good and might be the best choice, but after 17...f4!? or 17...dxe4 18.fxe4 f4!? White's task would be much more difficult over the board.
Let's have a look. After 17...dxe4 18.fxe4 f4!?, White has some alternatives: 19.♗h3!. If my memory serves me well, this was my original intention. It is the best move, though the situation is very tricky. With precise play White defends and then creates a counterattack:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

19...fxg3 20.♗xe6+ ♔h8 21.♗f5! (21.♗xc8? ♗xc8! and Black's attack is unstoppable) 21...♕g5 (21...gxh2+ 22.♔h1!) 22.♘f3 gxh2+ 23.♔h1 and now wherever the black queen goes, White keeps some initiative. 'Counter-initiative' is probably the right word: 23...♕h5! 24.♘e5 ♖c7 25.♕xh5 ♘xh5 26.♔xh2 ♗c8 27.♖f1 ♗xf5 28.♖xf5 ♖xf5 29.exf5 ♘f6 30.♔g2 and White is better.
The most unpleasant was 17...f4!?, but in fact it isn't that dangerous for White: 18.exd5! fxg3 (18...cxd5 19.♗h3!) 19.♖xe6! and now Black's attack looks dangerous, but I couldn't find anything good for him: 19...gxh2+ (also excellent for White is 19...♗b4 20.dxc6 gxh2+ 21.♔h1 ♕g5 22.♗c3 ♗xc3 23.♖xc3 ♕h4 24.♘e4 ♘h5 25.d5) 20.♔h1 ♖ce8 21.dxc6 ♗b4 22.♖xe8 ♖xe8 23.♘e4 ♘h5 24.♗c3 ♘f4 (White is also happy after 24...♗d6 25.♗e1 ♗c8 26.♘xd6 ♕xd6 27.f4 ♘xf4 28.♗g3 ♕h6 29.♕f3 ♘xg2 30.♖f1!) 25.♕d2 ♗d6 26.♗b4 ♗xb4 27.♕xf4 ♕xc6 28.a3! with a clear advantage for White.

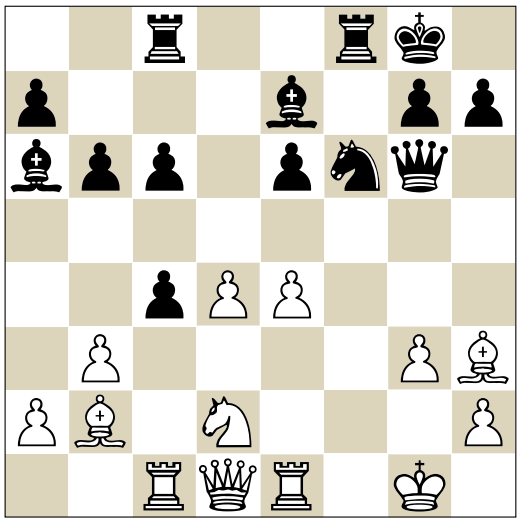
18.fxe4



18...dxc4?! Now White is better without any risk.

Best was 18...♗b4!, when the position will become pretty dry and equal: 19.♗c3 (slightly more ambitious than 19.exd5 exd5 20.a3 ♗xd2 21.♕xd2 ♖ce8 22.cxd5 ♖xe1+ 23.♖xe1 ♘xd5 24.♗e4 ♕f7 25.a4 ♖e8 26.♕f2) 19...♗a3 (the most precise, I think, but 19...♗xc3 is also possible) 20.♖b1 c5 (again, Black had a choice, but I like this move the most) 21.exd5 exd5 22.cxd5 ♗b7 23.♘c4 ♘xd5 24.♗d2 ♗b4 25.♘e5 (25.♗xb4 cxb4 26.♕d2 ♗a8 is also equal. The c3-square fully compensates for White's passed pawn) 25...♕xb1! (the easiest way to draw!) 26.♕xb1 ♗xd2 27.♘d7 ♖f7 28.♘e5 ♖ff8 and it is probably best for both players to repeat moves.

19.♗h3!



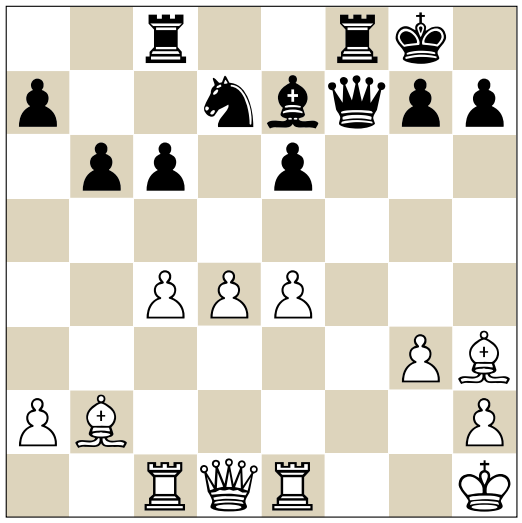
A very strong intermediate move! Otherwise Black would be fine.

19...♕f7 20.♘xc4 20.bxc4 was possible, but I didn't like the ending which arises after 20...♘d7 21.♖f1 (21.♕e2!? was a possibility I underestimated. Black has no useful moves, but his position is pretty solid) 21...♕g6 22.♕g4 ♕xg4 23.♗xg4 ♖xf1+ 24.♖xf1 ♘f8 and this ending indeed does not look dangerous for Black.

20...♗xc4 An alternative was 20...♗b4, but not a very promising one: 21.♖f1 ♕d7 22.♕e2 and Black has no useful moves, while White might just improve his position, for example with ♖f2, ♖af1 and at some point prepare e5!

21.bxc4 ♘d7 22.♔h1

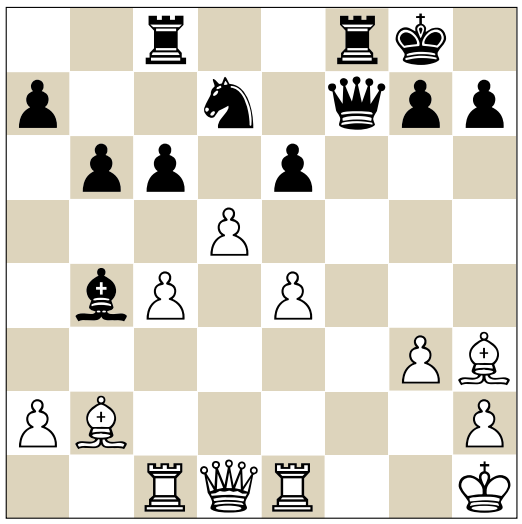
I wanted to play the middlegame, not the ending.



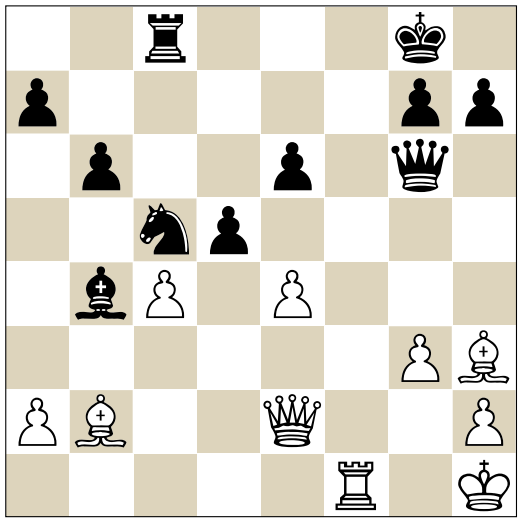
Again I was not that confident about the ending after 22.♖f1 ♕g6 23.♕g4 ♕xg4 24.♗xg4 ♖xf1+ 25.♖xf1 ♘f8, though of course White is better.

22...♗b4 22...♖ce8 was another possibility: 23.♖f1 ♕g6 24.♕e2 ♖xf1+ 25.♖xf1 ♖f8 26.♖d1 with advantage. White will prepare and play d5 at some point.

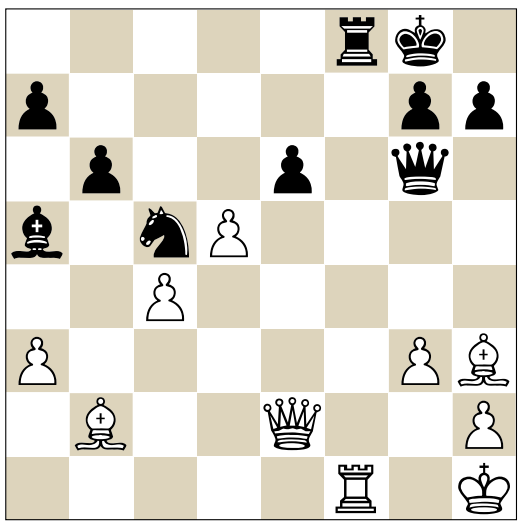
23.d5 I liked this move a lot.



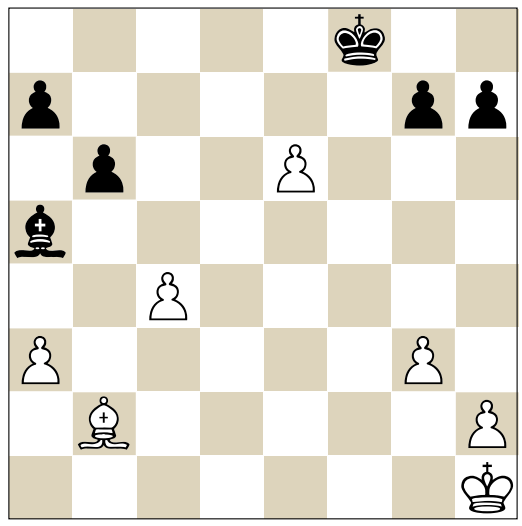
23...♘c5 24.♖f1 ♕g6 25.♕e2 ♖xf1+ 26.♖xf1 cxd5



27.a3! Again a nice intermezzo!
27...♗a5 Now the bishop is totally out of play. 27...♘xe4 doesn't work. The two bishops will be unstoppable: 28.axb4 ♖xc4 29.♕f3 ♖c8 30.♕e3 (threatening ♖f6!!) 30...♖e8 31.b5, with a big advantage.
28.exd5 ♖f8

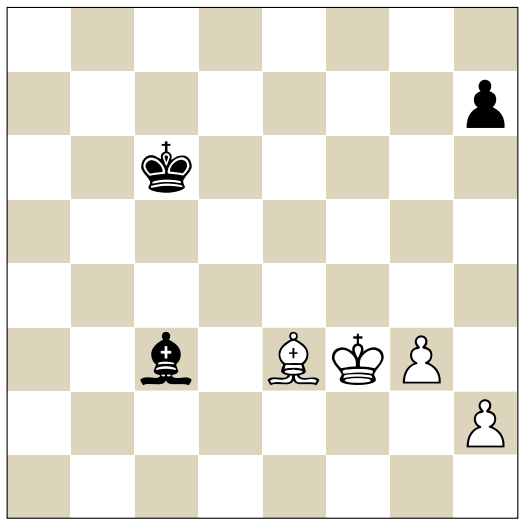


29.♗xe6+ I saw some ideas in the ending and I decided to go for it as in the worst case, a draw was still relatively satisfactory for me.
Not so clear was 29.d6 ♖xf1+ 30.♗xf1 ♔f7, although White is obviously better.
Another promising possibility was 29.♔g1, but with precise play I think Black can hold: 29...♖xf1+ 30.♗xf1 exd5 31.♕e5 ♕f7 (31...dxc4 favours White: 32.♗xc4+ ♔f8 33.♗b5 ♕b1+ 34.♗f1 ♕g6 35.♕b8+) 32.cxd5 ♘d7 33.♕e4 ♘f6 (33...♘c5 34.♕e3 is better for White) 34.♗xf6 ♕xf6 35.d6 g6 36.♗c4+ ♔f8 37.♕d5 ♔g7 38.♔g2 b5! and it looks like Black can hold.
29...♘xe6 30.♕xe6+ ♕xe6 31.♖xf8+ Again an intermediate move!! How many of them did I play in this game??
31...♔xf8 32.dxe6
Here is a very important moment.



32...a6? This loses easily. The only move was 32...♗d2!. Now White has a wide choice, and every time I look at this position I find another promising possibility for White... and then I refute it! I still haven't found a win, but maybe it is there!
Let's have a look: 33.a4!? (an attempt to win immediately, 33.e7+, probably doesn't work: 33...♔xe7 34.♗xg7 a6! (34...♗c1 35.a4 ♗e3 36.♔g2 ♔d6 37.♔f3 ♗g1 38.h4! ♔c5 39.g4 ♔xc4 40.♔e4! winning, was White's main idea) 35.a4 ♔d6 36.♗d4 ♔c6 37.♔g2 b5 38.axb5+ axb5 39.cxb5+ ♔xb5 40.♔f3 (Black has won a tempo com-

pared to the game) 40...♔c6 41.♗e3!? (cutting the black bishop off from the c1-h6 diagonal!) 41...♗c3!



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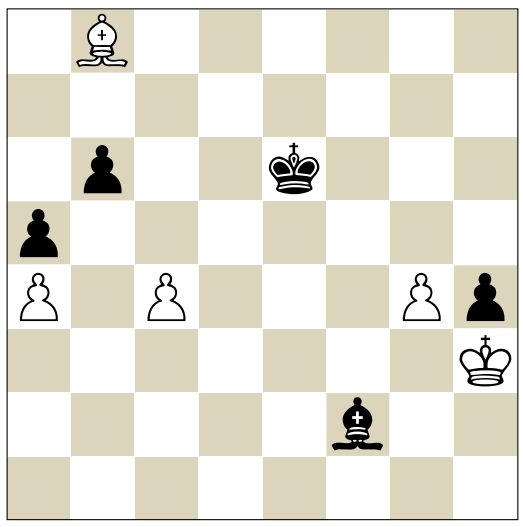
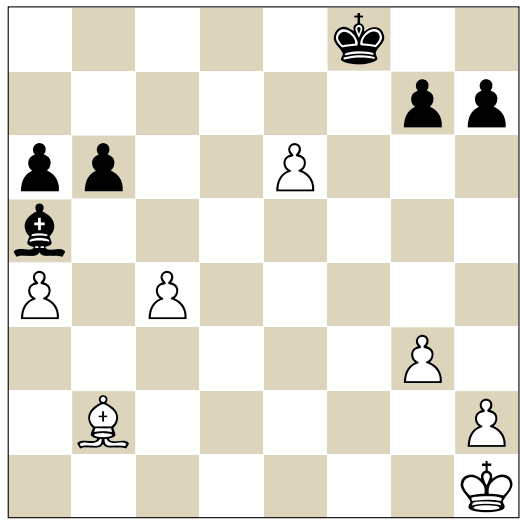
42.♔g4 ♔d7 43.♔h5 ♗g7 44.♗h6 ♗d4 45.♗f4 ♗g7 and Black holds) (33.♔g2 is met by 33...♗h6! 34.♔f3 (34.♗d4 ♔e7 35.c5 b5! is equal) 34...♔e7 35.♔e4 ♔xe6 and White's minimal edge will not be enough) 33...♗b4! 34.♗e5 ♗c5 35.g4 g5 36.♗f6 ♗e7 37.♗c3 ♗c5 38.♗d2 h6 39.♔g2 (39.h4 gxh4 40.♗xh6+ ♔e7 41.♔g2 ♔xe6 42.♗f4 ♔f6 43.♔h3 ♗f2 44.♗b8 a6 45.♗f4 a5 is the same) 39...♔e7 40.h4 gxh4 (40...♔f6 41.h5 wins) 41.♗xh6 ♔xe6 42.♗f4 ♗d4 43.♔h3 ♗f2 44.♗b8 a6 45.♗a7 a5 46.♗b8 and it's a fortress.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

33.a4

Now it is over.

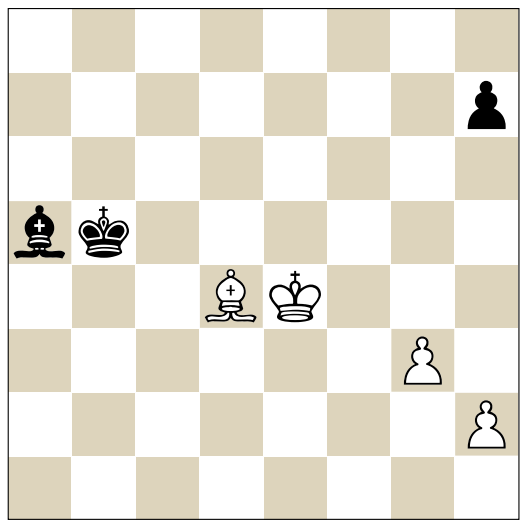


33...♔e7

33...♗b4! would be the last try, but it's not enough: 34.g4! g5 (34...g6 35.♗f6 and White wins) 35.♗c1 h6 36.♗e3 ♗a5 37.♔g2 ♔e7 38.♔f3 ♔xe6 39.♔e4 and White wins.

34.♗xg7 ♔xe6 35.♔g2 ♔d6 36.♗d4 ♔c6 37.♔f3 b5 38.axb5+ axb5 39.cxb5+ ♔xb5 40.♔e4

Black is just too late.



40...♔c4 Or 40...♔c6 41.♔e5! ♔d7 (41...♗d2 42.♔e6 winning) 42.♔f6 and White wins.

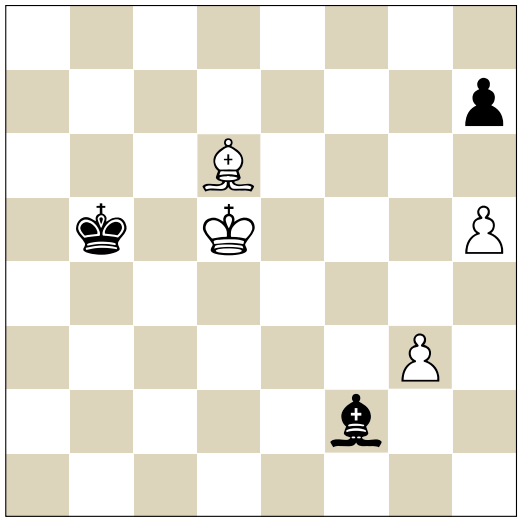
41.♗e3

Now I slowly promoted my pawns.

41...♗e1 42.♗f4 ♗c3 43.♗d6

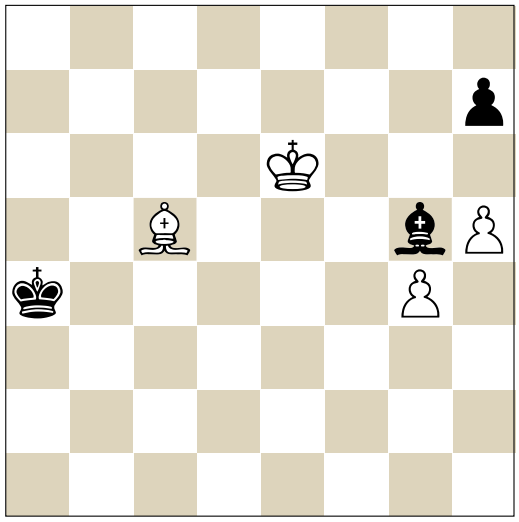
♗e1 44.h4 ♗f2 45.h5 ♔b5 46.♔d5

This was probably not necessary, but it is good to cut off the black king even more.



46...♗e3 47.g4 ♗g5 48.♗c5 ♔a4 49.♔e6

Finally the king goes over to help the pawns promote.



49...♔b5 50.♗e7 ♗d2 51.g5 ♔c6 52.g6 hxg6 53.hxg6 ♗h6 54.♔f7

Black resigned.

It was nice to beat my first grandmaster in such a convincing way. On top of that, this victory made me the winner of the tournament, which no doubt was a good start of my chess career in Holland!

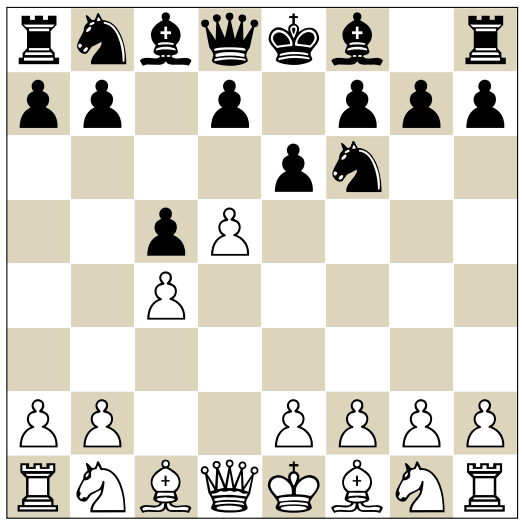
7

A77
Illya Nyzhnyk
Anish Giri
Enschede 2008

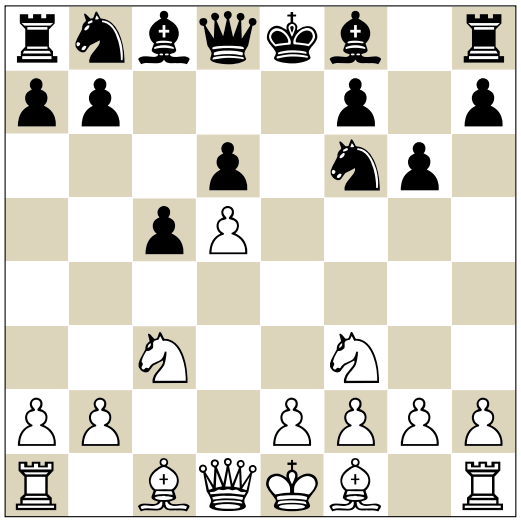
The Young Masters in Enschede was a closed tournament where promising Dutch players could have a shot at norms and gain experience playing each other and their international colleagues. This Benoni against the Ukrainian prodigy was a fight I was quite proud of back then and I still have warm memories connected to it. It was unusual for me to play a younger opponent, but finally I managed to cope with this task quite well...

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6

In the very first round I had suffered a very painful loss in my pet King's Indian and I decided it was time to broaden my repertoire. Needless to say, this game made me think I made the right decision, but the problem is, I still can't stop this process of broadening my repertoire, which keeps spreading like a virus and takes more and more of my free time...



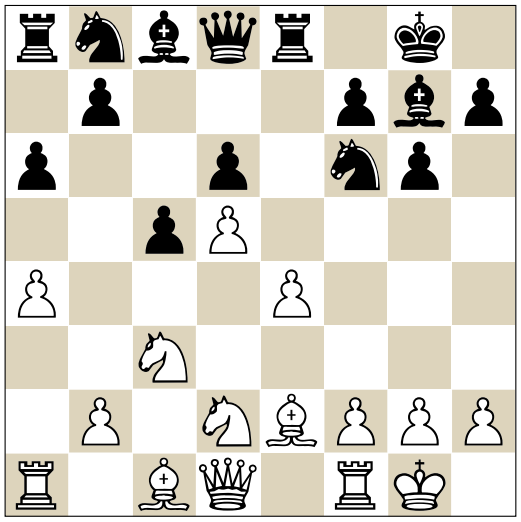
4.♘c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♘f3 g6



7.♘d2 A principled line, which I was very happy to play against.

The move order chosen in the game is aimed against something like 7.e4 a6!? 8.a4 ♗g4 when Black can get rid of what is known to be the 'problem bishop' of the Benoni, the guy on c8.

7...♗g7 8.e4 0-0 9.♗e2 ♖e8 10.0-0 a6 11.a4



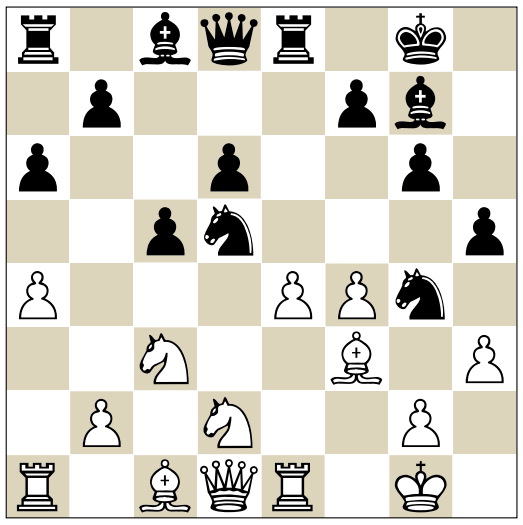
11...♘bd7

I was quite familiar with this set-up, but of course there is also the plan with ...♘a6-c7, from where the knight nicely supports the ...b5 break.

12.♖e1 A cautious move, typical for this variation. 12.f4 is the obvious alternative, but a move like 12.♕c2!? also has a life of its own.

12...♖b8 I knew that it is always good to include this move.

12...♘e5 right away seems quite interesting, as after the ambitious 13.f4 ♘eg4 14.♗f3 Black has 14...h5 with the idea after 15.h3 to strike with (here 15.♘c4 ♘xe4! 16.♖xe4 ♗d4+ 17.♖xd4 cxd4 18.♘e4 ♕h4 – 18...♗f5!? – was played back in 1982, in the game Gheorgiu-Liu. I do not know who is the talented player playing with Black, but he did beat a famous grandmaster) 15...♘xd5!



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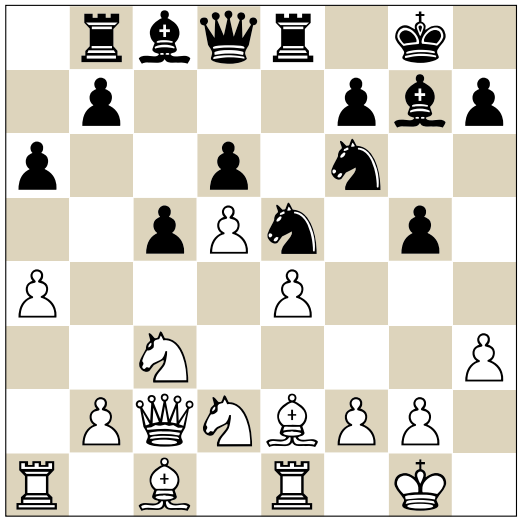
16.♘xd5 ♗d4+ 17.♔f1 ♕h4 18.♔e2! ♘f2 19.♕b3 ♗e6 with a very dangerous attack for the piece.

13.♕c2 ♘e5 14.h3

Preparing to send the knight back to where it came from. Now Black has to take a decision.

14.f4?! ♘eg4 is now really awkward.

14...g5!? Such ideas were not new to me. Objectively speaking, this anti-positional positional decision may not be as good as the textbooks say. Black hopes that his control over the e5-square compensates for the weakness of f5.



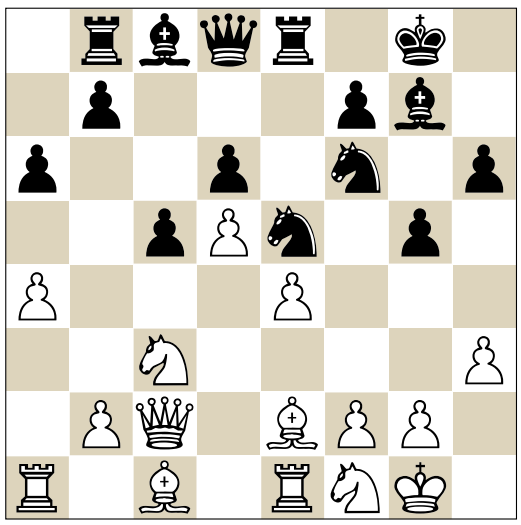
Another such anti-positional positional Benoni trick is 14...♘h5!? 15.♗xh5 gxh5 16.f4 ♘g6 17.♘f3 and now the threat of f5 looks quite intimidating, especially for the bishop on c8, so Black has to quickly initiate some play with 17...b5!? with a mess.

15.♘f1

The typical way to meet the ...g5 advance. The knight is heading to g3 to exploit the weakness of the f5-square.

15...h6

Back then this seemed quite clever to me, but now I am not so sure that I would be so subtle.

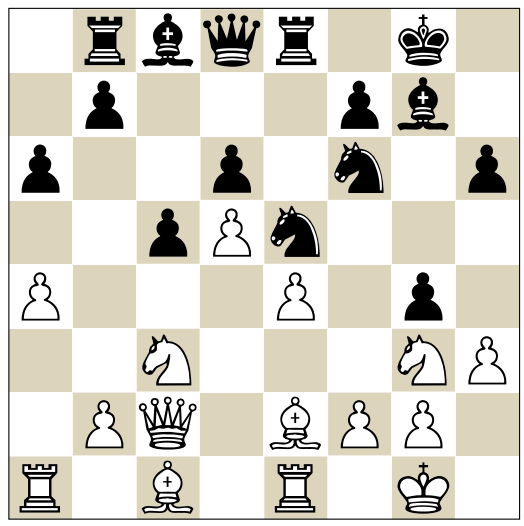


Quite good is 15...g4! straight away, but I was waiting for the knight to appear on g3. Black gets counterplay here after 16.hxg4 (16.h4 ♘h5!, hitting the pawn on h4, also gives Black nice play) 16...♘fxg4 17.f3 and now the strong and thematic 17...♘h6! 18.♗e3 (18.g4? prevents ...f5, but eventually Black will just sac a piece and it will not be any fun: 18...♕h4 19.♗e3 ♔h8! followed by ...♖g8 and a sacrifice on f3 or g4, with a crushing attack) 18...f5! and the position is totally unclear. Black will follow up with ...♕f6, ...♗d7 etc. with a nice and typical Benoni.

16.♘g3 White has an easy plan of improving his pieces with ♘d1-e3, ♖a3 etc. So Black has to act.

16.f4!? is a move, when after 16...gxf4 17.♗xf4 the question remains what is more important: the control over the dark squares or the light ones?

16...g4!?

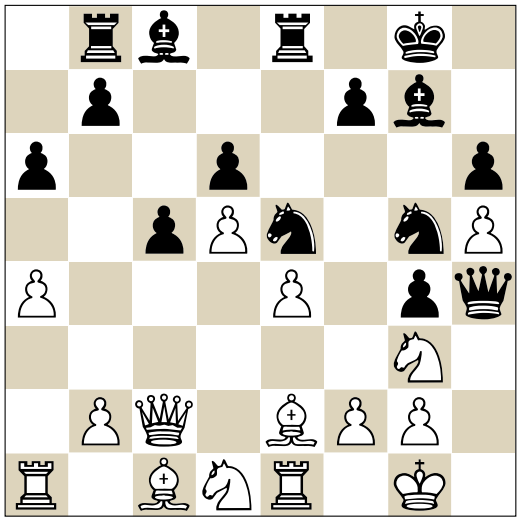


17.h4 17.hxg4?! ♘fxg4 18.f3? ♕h4! was my idea, when the knight on g3 is badly misplaced.

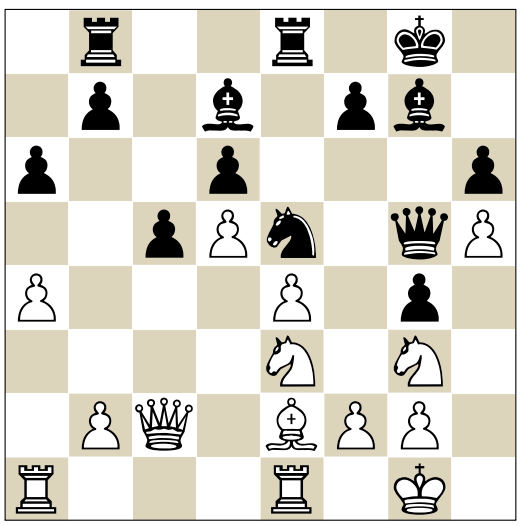
17...♘h7! Black must act. **18.h5 ♕h4** I liked this construction, but my opponent also had an idea.

19.♘d1! ♘g5!

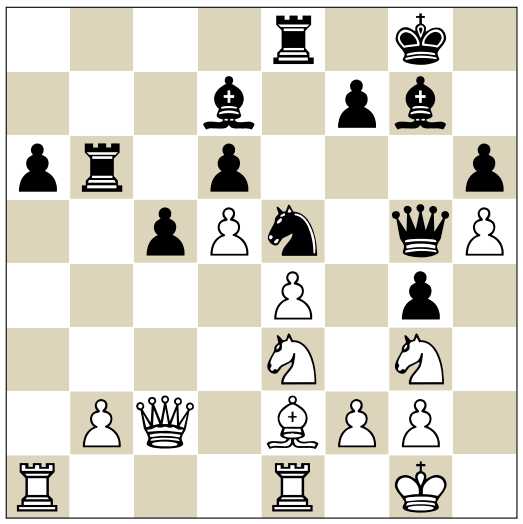
19...♘f6 20.♘e3 ♘xh5 21.♘ef5 gives White fantastic play for the sacrificed pawn.



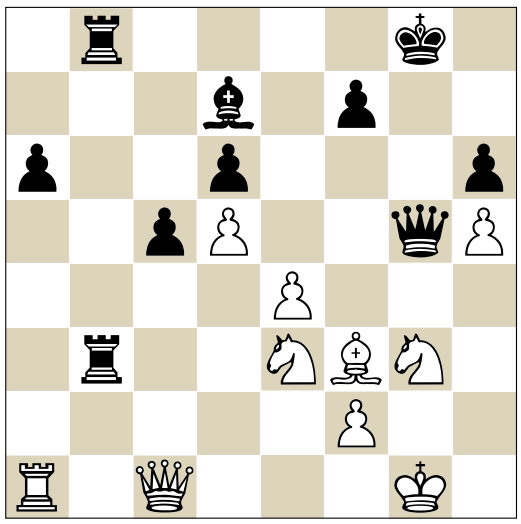
20.♗xg5
The bishop is quite dear to White, but my young opponent may have been annoyed by various ...♘f3+ sacrifices. 20.♖a3 merely delays the capture on g5, as after 20...b5 21.axb5 axb5 White doesn't have another useful move, apartfrom ♗xg5, as 22.♘e3? runs into 22...♘ef3+! 23.gxf3 gxf3 24.♗f1 ♗e5 and Black gets a crushing attack.
20...♕xg5 21.♘e3
Black has the control over the dark squares, but the f5-square is still weak, so White has something to be proud of as well.
21...♗d7 I was hesitant to play 21... b5, which after 22.axb5 axb5 closes the b-file, while opening the a-file for the white rook.



22.a5?! I always wonder whether this restricitive move is good. Often it only speeds up Black's counter-play. In the game, I remember, I was quite happy that my opponent let me activate my b8-rook.
22.♖a3!? would be harder to meet. I guess Black would have to make some abstract move like 22...♕f4.
22...b5! 23.axb6 ♖xb6



24.♖xa6?
Allowing the activation of Black's rook with tempo. Instead, White should have played more cautiously. Correct was 24.b3! ♖eb8 25.♖eb1 with very unclear play: 25...♘f3+!? leads to a mess (25...♗c8 is less ambitious: 26.♖a2 and now both sides lack a clear plan and the position should be balanced) 26.gxf3 gxf3 27.♗xf3 (27.♗c4 ♗d4 gives Black something between an attack and long-term compensation. In short, he has a good position) 27...♗xa1 28.♖xa1 ♖xb3 (28...♕f6 looks like a double attack, but it is met by the double defence 29.♕d1!) 29.♕c1 and White has managed to protect himself from immediate threats, but Black can continue his initiative, for example:



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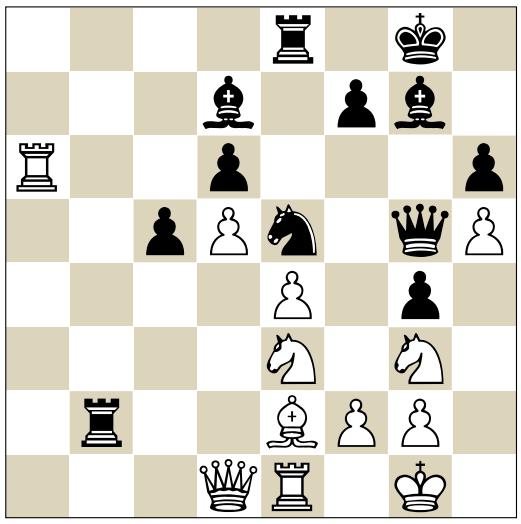
29...♕f6 30.♔g2 ♖xe3! 31.fxe3 ♖b2+ 32.♗e2 ♕g7 with a draw: 33.♔f2 ♕f6+ 34.♔g2 ♕g7.

After 24.♖eb1 ♖eb8 Black threatens ...♖xb2 and if White tries to avoid playing b3 (not to run into ... ♘f3+) with 25.♖a2 there is 25...♖b3!? (or the clever – 25...a5!?).

24...♖xb2! 25.♕d1



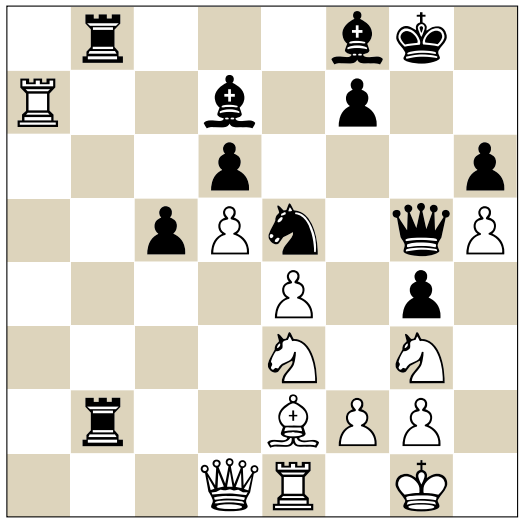
25...♗f8

I was very happy about my position, but I was hesistating whether I should give up my d6-pawn.

25...♖eb8! was good. The d6-pawn is quite poisoned: 26.♖xd6 (26.♕c1! ♕f4 27.♖f1! is more solid, but it's still Black who is having all the fun) 26...♕f4! 27.♖a6 ♖8b3! and Black has an overwhelming initiative.

26.♖a7 ♗g7 27.♖a6 ♗f8 28.♖a7 ♖eb8

I didn't see the need to repeat moves, having pretty much all that a Benoni player can hope for.

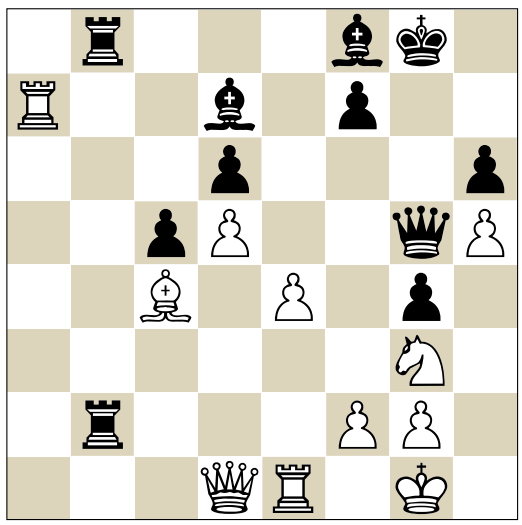


29.♘c4?

An understandable desire to exchange the strong knight, but it just doesn't work.

A cautious move like 29.♕a1!? was a better alternative. White has no objects to attack, but he is quite solid and although Black is the one having the initiative, White can still hope for a successful defence.

29...♘xc4 30.♗xc4



30...♗g7!! I was and still am terribly proud of this move, leading

to fireworks. Preserving the bishop instead would give White some time to defend.

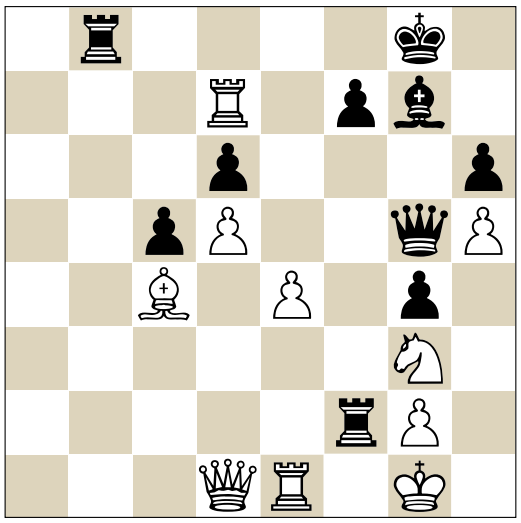
31.♖xd7

I remember having to fight against my little opponent's strong body language that was displaying confidence.

However, I decided to trust my calculation. White can't defend himself with the passive 31.♖f1, as after the simple 31...♖2b7 32.♖xb7 ♖xb7 Black will establish his bishop on e5 and dominate for 'free'.

31...♖xf2!

Total collapse on the dark squares.



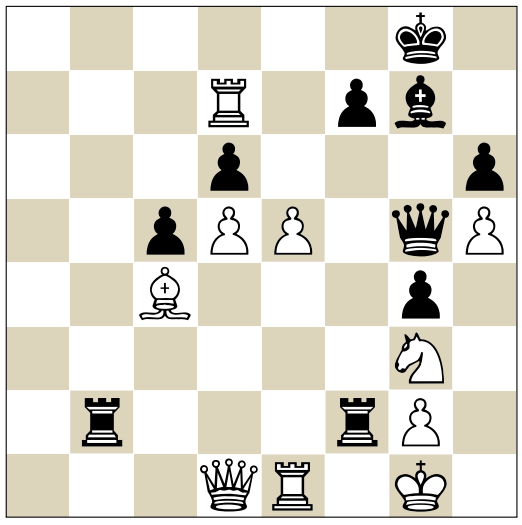
32.e5

32.♔xf2 ♗d4+ 33.♕xd4! was the best try, but White is nevertheless losing after 33...cxd4 34.♔g1 (34.♘f5 ♕d2+! 35.♗e2 g3+!) 34...♕h4! 35.♔f2 ♖b2+ 36.♖e2 ♕g5!! 37.♖xb2 ♕e3+ 38.♔f1 ♕c1+ 39.♔f2 ♕xb2+ 40.♘e2 ♕c2 followed by ...d3, gaining a decisive material advantage.

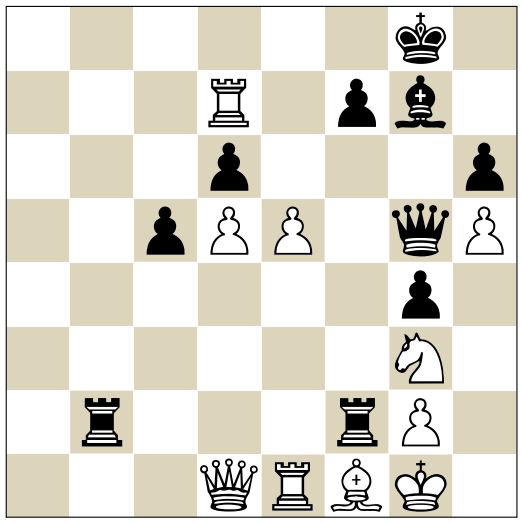
On 32.♕c1, 32...♖d2! threatening ...♗d4+ wins easily.

32...♖bb2!

Too many pieces take part in the attack.



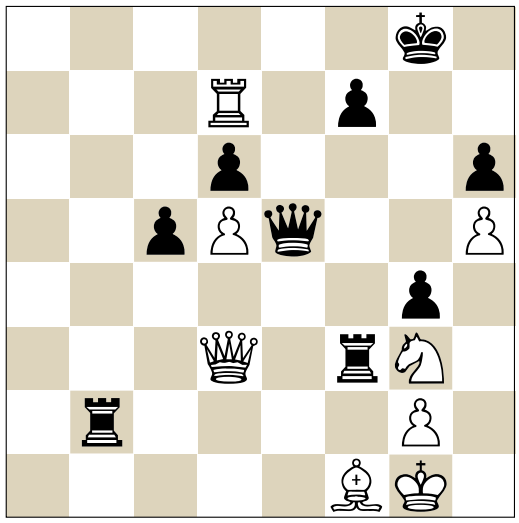
33.♗f1 What else?



33...♗xe5 White has no defence.

34.♖e4 34.♖xe5 was a better try, but after 34...dxe5 35.♘e4 ♕f4 White is dead lost; the rook can't be captured: 36.♘xf2 ♕xf2+ 37.♔h1 ♕h4+ 38.♔g1 g3! and mate. **34...♖f4 35.♖xe5 ♕xe5 36.♕d3 ♖f3!**

The quickest path to victory.

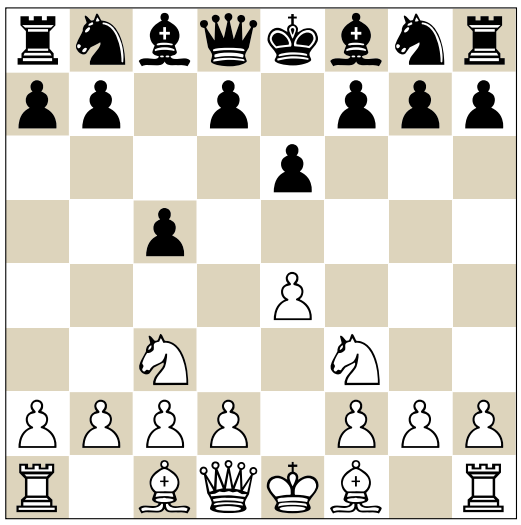


37.♖d8+ ♔g7 38.♘f5+ ♖xf5
White resigned. This one made me quite happy.

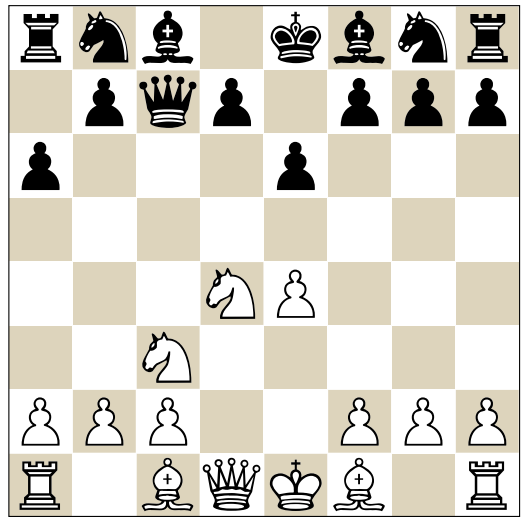
8

B43
Anish Giri
Jan Werle
Germany 2008

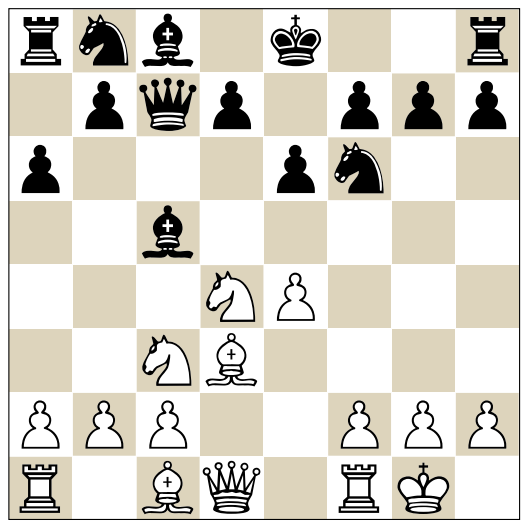
This game was played on the Saturday of that fortunate weekend for me in the German Bundesliga.
I was slowly getting ready to challenge the GM title and beating two 2600 players in a row certainly did not harm my ambitions!
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.♘c3
At the time I was toying with the move orders in the Sicilian.



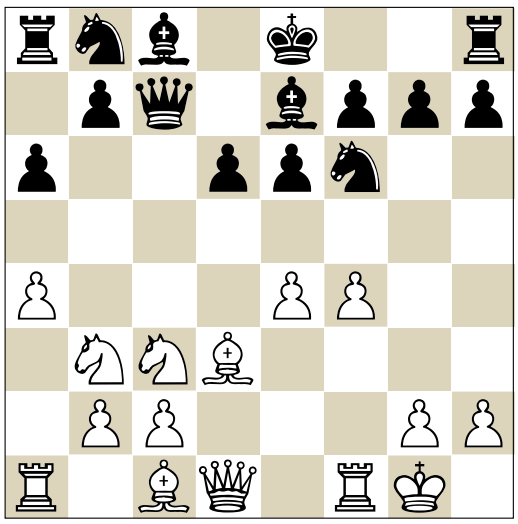
3...a6
3...♘c6 4.♗b5 was probably my point. There are quite a few tricks here which I was well aware of and used to employ from time to time.
4.d4 cxd4 5.♘xd4 ♕c7
I didn't expect this system of the Sicilian, called the Kan Variation, but Dutch grandmaster Jan Werle most probably wanted to take his young opponent out of his book. Actually, Jan was on the rise at that point, as just some days before this event he achieved the highest point in his career by winning a very strong open tournament in Liverpool!



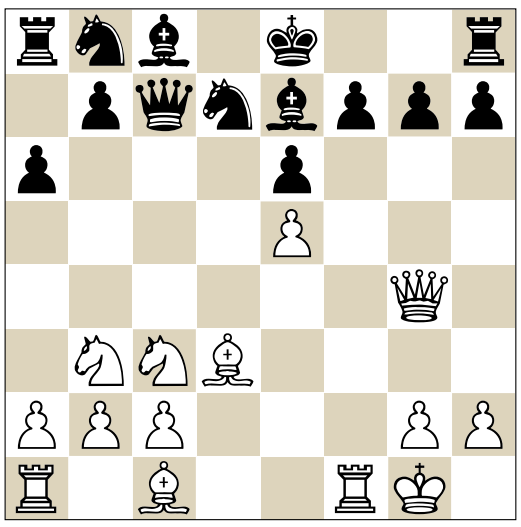
6.♗d3 ♘f6 7.0-0 ♗c5
One of the main lines of the Kan. Black chases the knight away from the central square, before putting the bishop where it belongs, on e7. There is also a similar manoeuvre ...♕b6-c7, which leads to the same thing.



8.♘b3 ♗e7 9.f4 d6 10.a4!?
I think I knew this idea. White is using the fact that 10...b6 is too slow here.



The attempt to break through instantly doesn't really work, but comes close: 10.e5!? dxe5 11.fxe5 ♘fd7! (11...♕xe5? is a mistake, but was played in one of the most epic battles on the Dutch chess scene: 12.♗f4 ♕h5 13.♗e2 ♕g6 and here young Dutch talent Benjamin Bok and his experienced opponent Loek van Wely repeated moves (♗d3-♕h5-♗e2-♕g6) 23(!!) times (I believe both players decided to show their most stubborn side), when instead White could have achieved a tremendous position with 14.h4! h5 15.♗g5, when the queen on g6 is in the cage and White is close to winning) 12.♕g4 and now there are two ways for Black, both seem quite playable:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

12...g6 13.♗h6 ♘xe5 14.♕g3 and now improving on the game Van Kampen-Spoelman, played in the same Dutch championship where Bok and Van Wely produced their masterpiece: 14...f5! (taking away the e4-square from White's bishop. 14...♘bc6 15.♗e4!) 15.♗g7 and after the forced sequence 15...♗c5+! 16.♘xc5 ♕xg7 17.♖ae1 ♘bc6 18.♗xf5! exf5 19.♘d3 0-0 20.♘xe5 ♘xe5 21.♖xe5 ♗d7 the position slowly equalizes.

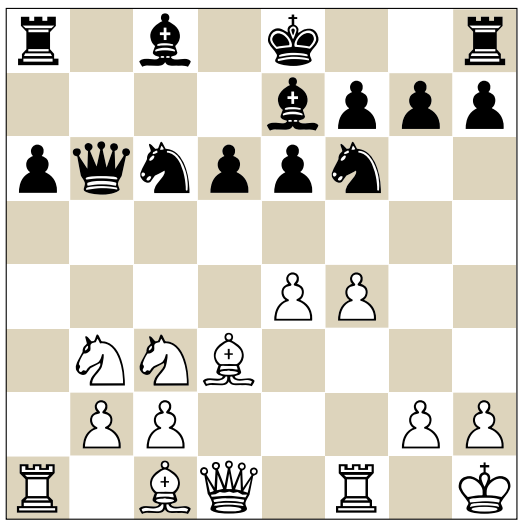
The exchange sac 12...0-0!? also looks quite alright, since the e5-pawn is doomed: 13.♗h6 g6!.

10...♘c6 10...b6?! is too maximalistic and naive: 11.e5! dxe5 12.fxe5 ♘fd7 13.♕g4 g6 14.♗h6 ♘xe5 15.♕g3 f5 and here compared to 10.e5, White has some extra resources, the most powerful being 16.♗b5+! when the inclusion of a4 b6 pays off. White is winning here.

11.a5! b5 Otherwise White gets an unpleasant grip on b6.

12.axb6 ♕xb6+ 13.♔h1

Now the queenside is a little open, which I was hoping to use to my advantage. Here, though, instead of playing in a standard fashion with 13...0-0, my opponent went for the creative thrust:

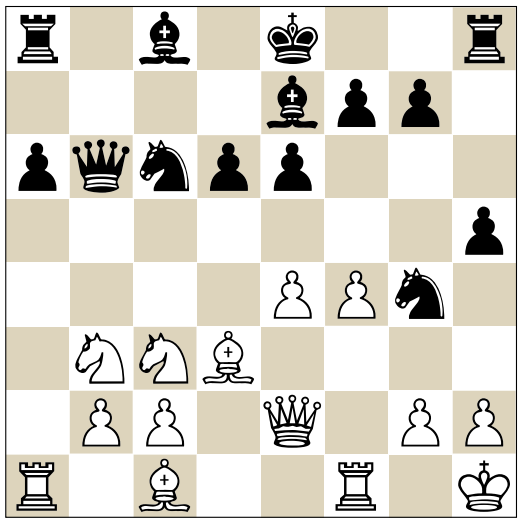


13...h5?!

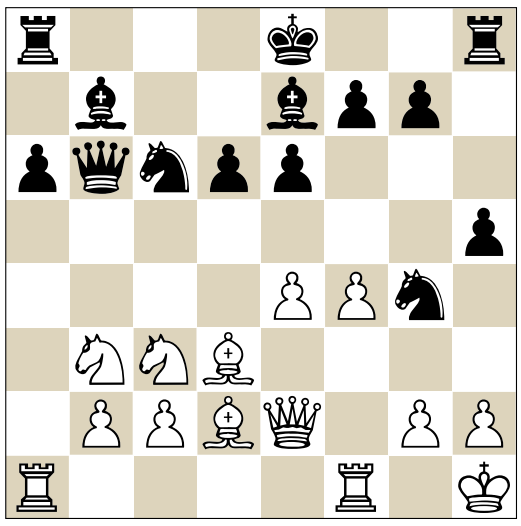
13...0-0 14.♕e2 ♘b4 is quite alright for Black, when 15.♘a5!? looks nice, but seems somewhat of a shot in the dark to me. Black can develop his queenside around the knight with the eventual ...♗d7.

14.♕e2 ♘g4

There is a term 'psychic attack', which applies here. The knight on g4 has the sole purpose of playing on the opponent's nerves, which can be quite effective against inexperienced players.



15.♗d2 ♗b7



16.♖ae1 Now I would hesitate to move the rook away from the semi-open a-file. 16.♖a4!? is perhaps a better place for the rook, taking control of the 4th rank in this weird fashion, while keeping an eye on the semi-open a-file: 16...♗f6 17.♘d1!? followed by ♘e3 looks good for White.

Alternatively, 16.h3 doesn't really attack the knight, but according to the machine, it's good to get Black nervous as well.

16...♗f6

Here 16...♗h4! was quite strong, provoking at least some weaknesses. In fact Jan went for this idea later, but it came at the wrong moment. Play could continue: 17.g3 ♗e7 18.h3 ♘f6 19.♔h2 and the white king is pretty safe.

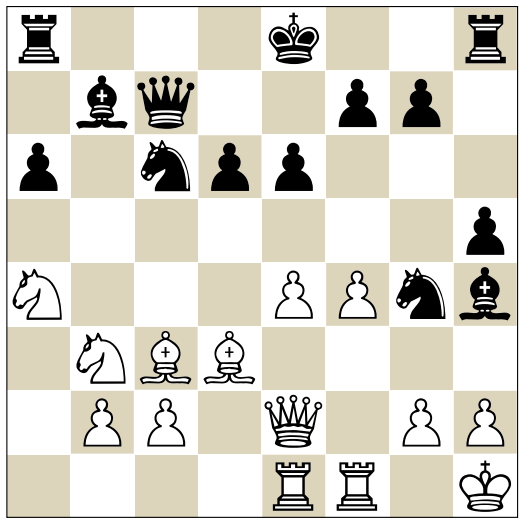
Still it was a good idea to provoke these moves. Who knows, one day there could be a trick.

17.♘a4 ♕c7 18.♗c3!?

I decided to exchange the bishops to keep it simple.

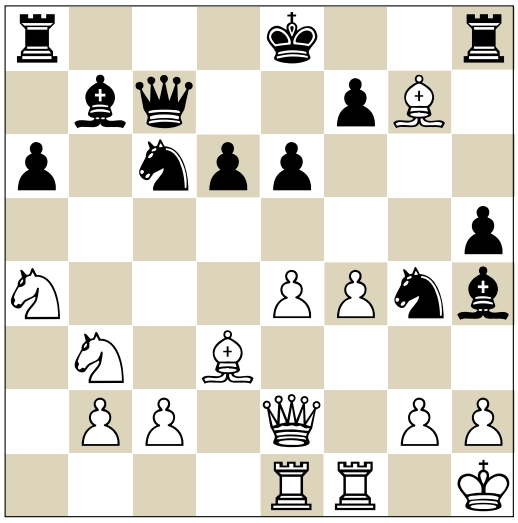
18...♗h4?!

Now this is playing with fire.

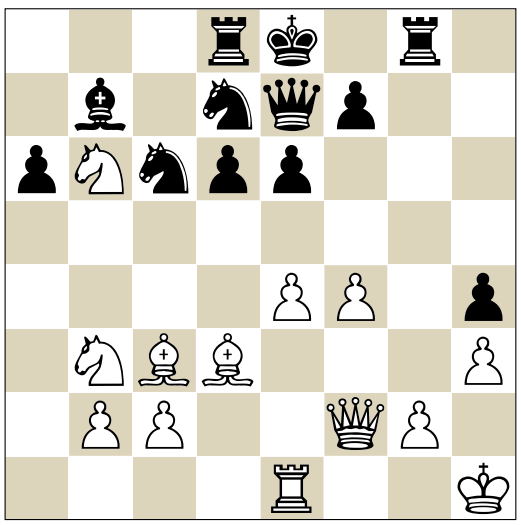


18...♗xc3 is boring, but was necessary: 19.♘xc3 ♘b4 and now White can start some action: 20.h3!? ♘f6 21.e5! dxe5 22.fxe5 ♘d7 23.♗e4 when it's clear that 13...h5 has backfired.

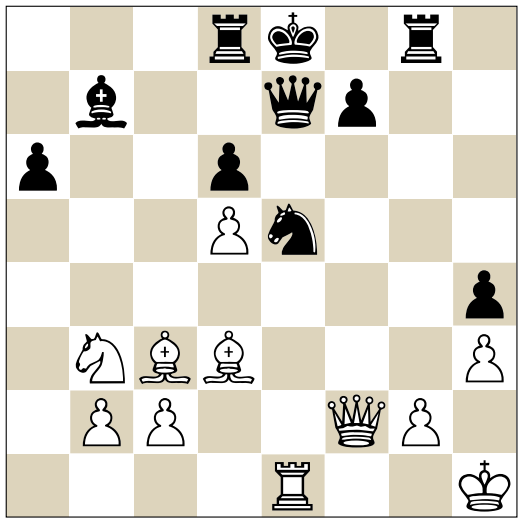
19.♗xg7!
A powerful exchange sacrifice.



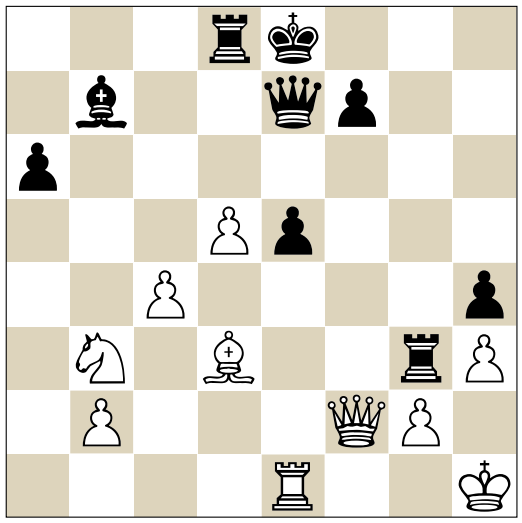
19...♖g8 20.♗c3 ♗xe1
21.♕xe1 White has control over the dark squares and the black king is forever weak.
21...♕e7 22.h3 ♘f6 23.♕f2 h4
Creating the unpleasant idea of ...♘h5-g3, but it will soon transpire that the knight on g3 doesn't hit anything.
24.♘b6 ♖d8 25.♖e1 ♘d7
The position is already quite bad, but now White has another strong shot. Probably, 25...♘h5 was the plan, but after 26.♘d5! Black loses immediately.



26.♘d5! exd5 27.exd5 ♘ce5 28.fxe5 ♘xe5



29.♗xe5?!
I started playing it too safe, giving away a major part of my advantage. Fortunately in time-trouble it still proved to be enough.
After 29.♗e4! ♖g3 30.♘d4! followed by ♘f5 or ♘c6, the outpost on e5 would soon have been torn apart.
29...dxe5 30.c4 ♖g3

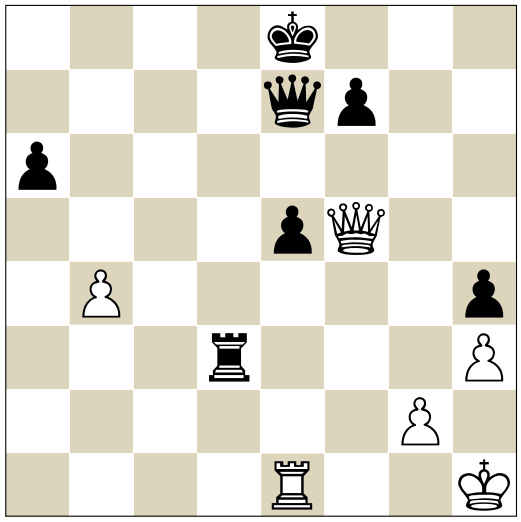


31.♘c5?
Another mistake, allowing my opponent to simplify the position and get good drawing chances.
The way to break through was 31.♕f5! ♗c8 32.♕h5! ♖xd3 33.♖xe5 ♖xb3 34.c5! and with the pawns rolling and the black pieces so uncoordinated, the white queen will manage it all by herself. Also

quite powerful was 31.♗c2!? ♖xd5 32.cxd5 ♗xd5 33.♕f5!, when it turns out that the attack on g2 brings only one check: 33...♗xg2+ 34.♔h2 ♗b7 35.♗e4! ♖xb3 36.♗xb7 ♕xb7 37.♕xe5+ and White mates.

31...♗xd5! 32.cxd5 ♖xd5 33.b4 ♖gxd3 34.♘xd3 ♖xd3 35.♕f5

The drawing tendencies are quite high, but Black has some issues with his king.

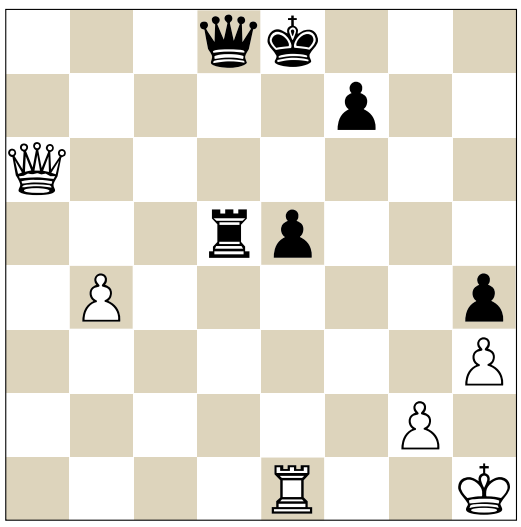


35...♖d5?!

Not the most precise.

35...♖d6! should hold: 36.♕c8+ ♕d8 37.♖xe5+ ♔f8 38.♕xd8+ ♖xd8 39.♖e4 ♖d5 40.♖xh4 a5 with a drawn endgame, in which I could merely torture my opponent.

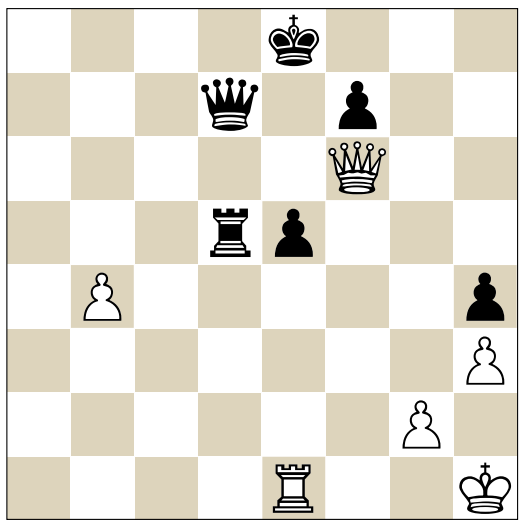
36.♕c8+ ♕d8 37.♕xa6



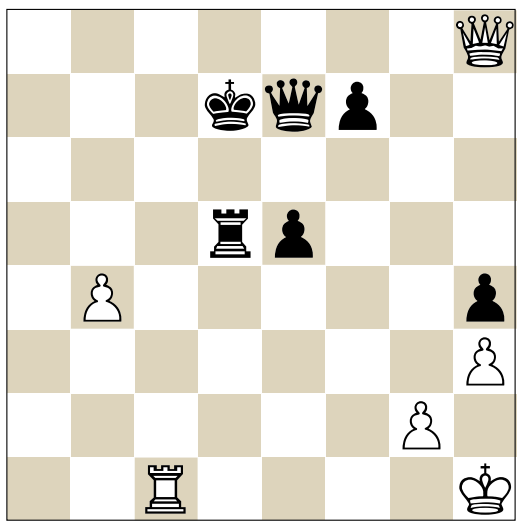
37...♕d7? Black had to use his time to evacuate the king:

37...♔f8! 38.♕h6+ ♔g8 39.♖e4 and it seems that the white rook is joining the attack, but Black has a witty defence: 39...♖d1+! 40.♔h2 ♖d4 41.♖xe5 ♕c7! (pinning the rook and securing the safety of Black's king. Here White can't make any progress) 42.♕g5+ ♔f8 43.♔g1. The rook is unpinned, but now 43...♖d1+ 44.♔f2 ♕d6! threatens some checks and since Black managed to secure his own king, the position becomes equal.

38.♕f6 Now the king comes under a strong attack.



38...♕e7 38...♕d6! 39.♕xd6 ♖xd6 40.♖xe5+ is a very sad rook endgame, but Black should have tried it. **39.♕h8+ ♔d7 40.♖c1?!**



I didn't yet spot the winning idea, but fortunately in the game I got the time to correct myself.

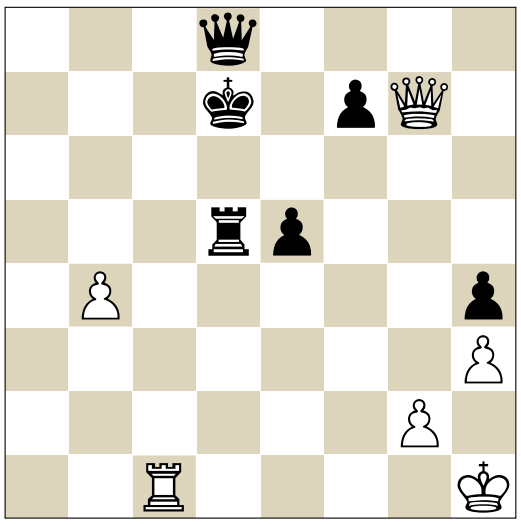
40...♕d8?!

40...♕xb4! was the only way to try and save the game. Quite surprisingly, White doesn't checkmate the black king: 41.♕c8+ ♔e7 42.♖c7+ ♔f6 43.♕h8+ ♔g6 44.♕g8+ ♔h6! 45.♖c6+ ♖d6! 46.♕f8+ ♔g5!. The rook on d6 seems hanging, but it turns out that there is a perpetual on the agenda (...♕e1+-♕g3+), so 47.♕e7+! ♔f5 48.♕xf7+ ♔g5 49.♕g7+ ♔f5 and now that White has protected the g3-square, he has to go for the queen endgame: 50.♖xd6 ♕xd6 51.♕g4+ ♔f6 52.♕xh4+ ♔g7 53.♕e4 which is probably winning, as the e5-pawn is not an asset, rather a disturbance for Black's defence. At least, that's how I see it.

Losing was 40...e4 41.♕c8+ ♔d6 42.b5! and the b-pawn joins the fray: 42...e3 43.b6 e2 44.♕c6+ ♔e5 45.b7 and White wins.

41.♕g7!

Time-trouble was over and the black king is in serious trouble.



41...♔e8 42.♖f1!

A clever manoeuvre, found after the time control.

42...♕e7 43.♖a1!

Finally hitting on the right idea. The rook needed more space.

43...♕c7 43...♕d8 44.♖a8! is why the rook needed more space: 44...♕xa8 45.♕g8+ picking up the queen.

44.♕h8+ ♔d7 45.♕f6 e4 46.♕xf7+

Black resigned. Quite a game!

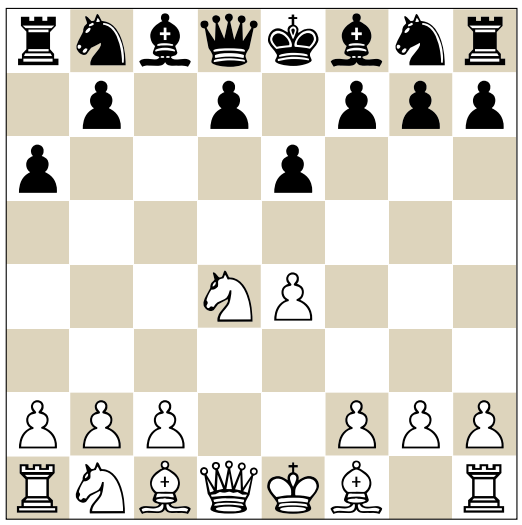
9

B42
Mateusz Bartel
Anish Giri
Germany 2008

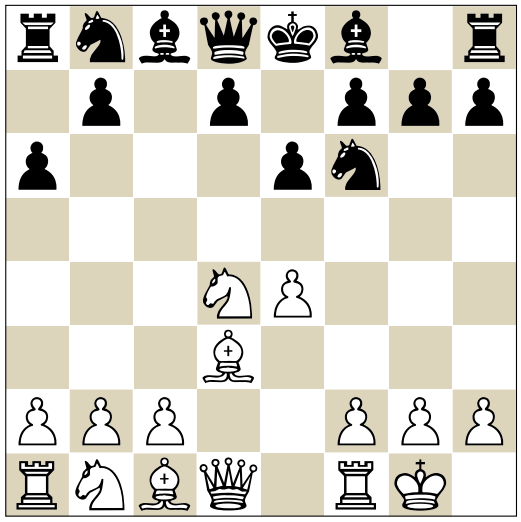
This was the Sunday of that fortunate weekend... I was facing another strong GM. This time my opponent was the talented Polish grandmaster Mateusz Bartel.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 a6

I myself played the Kan as well. I was aiming for a Hedgehog type of structure which very much appealed to me.



5.♗d3 ♘f6 6.0-0



6...d6

I used to consider this cleverer, thinking that the queen may not necessarily go to c7, while the pawn should definitely go to d6.

Now, however I understand that the idea of the main move 6...♕c7 is quite valid. Black 'prevents' c4 for one move, so White is also forced to make a semi-useful queen move: 7.♕e2 (7.c4?! ♘c6! gives Black too good a control over the dark squares) 7...d6 8.c4 and the question is which side benefits from the inclusion of the queen moves ...♕c7 and ♕e2.

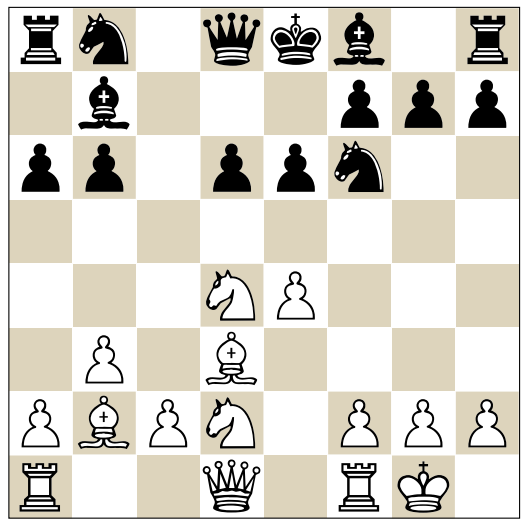
7.b3

To 7.c4 I was going to reply 7...g6 (or perhaps 7...b6).

7...b6

I think this was a good opportunity to fianchetto the other bishop instead: 7...g6!? 8.♗b2 ♗g7, neutralizing the b2-bishop somewhat. This version of the Hedgehog is considered to be good for Black.

8.♗b2 ♗b7 9.♘d2

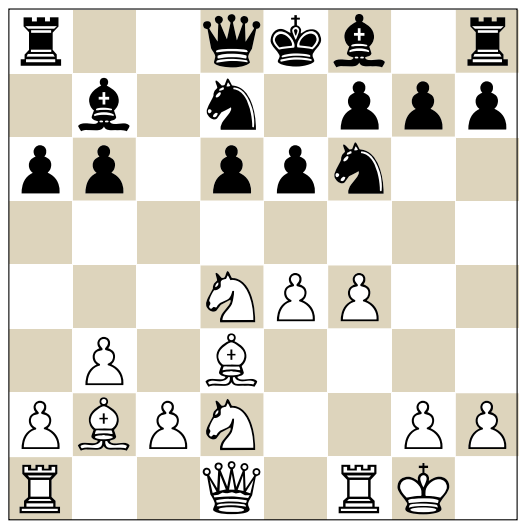


9...♘bd7

9...♗e7 is another move order, when after 10.f4 0-0 11.♕e2 (11.e5 is too early though: 11...dxe5 12.fxe5 ♗c5!) the situation looks somewhat alarming and I don't see how Black can benefit from this move order.

10.f4

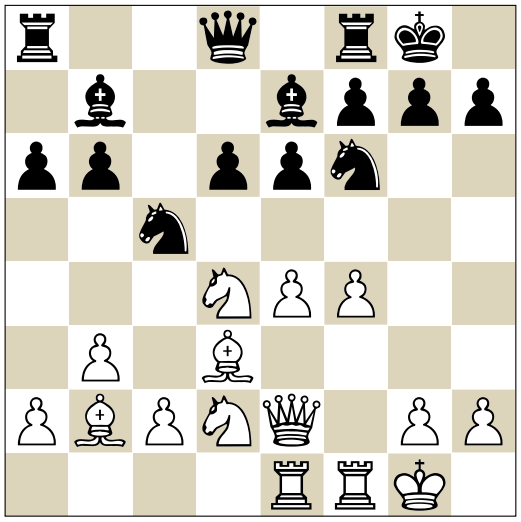
White has an easy way of pushing his pawns, but the Hedgehog is known for hurting his enemies once they touch him!



10...♘c5!?

It is useful to touch the d3-bishop.

11.♕e2 ♗e7 12.♖ae1 0-0



It seems clever to postpone castling with something like 12...♖c8, but I don't see any particular benefits. White can either go for e5 or try 13.♖f3 as in the game.

13.♖f3

Going for an attack and making it pretty clear to everyone in the room. 13.e5 is not so dangerous: 13...dxe5 14.fxe5 ♘fd7 and since the sacrifice on h7 doesn't work, Black is reasonably safe here: 15.♗xh7+?! ♔xh7 16.♕h5+ ♔g8 17.♖e3 ♗g5! 18.♖h3 ♗h6 and Black defends.

13...♖e8 The plan of ...♖e8 and ...♗f8 is quite standard, but don't think it was the right way here.

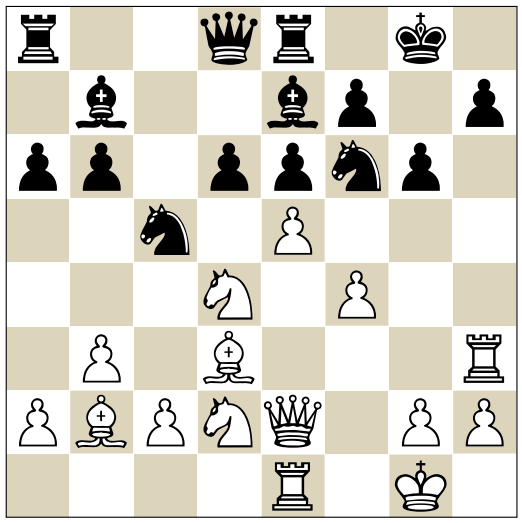
13...b5!? 14.♖h3 g6 is suggested by the cool-hearted machine.

13...g6!? looks most logical to me, when ...e5 is a threat and after 14.f5 (14.♖g3!? is considerably more ingenious, when the tension remains) 14...e5 15.fxg6 fxg6! Black is safe. White saves the knight, but his initiative is gone: (15...hxg6 16.♘f5! looks dangerous) 16.♗c4+ ♔g7 17.♘e6+ ♘xe6 18.♗xe6 b5 19.♔h1 ♗c8! and Black is doing excellent.

14.♖h3 g6

Always useful when they come to mate you. Black is ready now to strike with ...e6-e5, but White is first.

15.e5



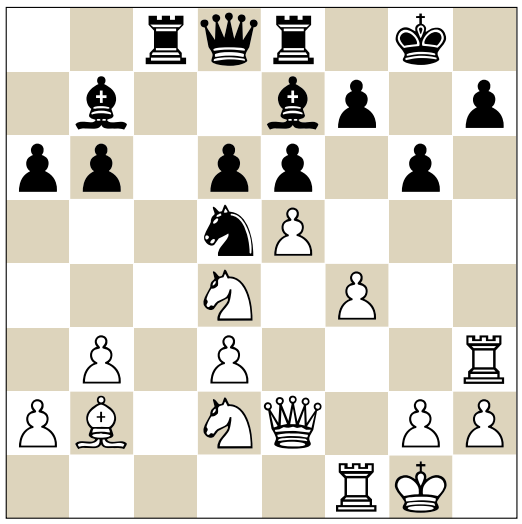
15...♘d5 A natural move, attacking the f4-pawn, but White would anyway like to shift to the f-file.

15...dxe5!? was quite clever: 16.fxe5 ♘xd3 17.cxd3 (17.♖xd3 is a better move. Now 17...♘d7 is unclear, but for the time being the black king seems safe and so his position should be decent) and now the point of the whole operation: 17...♗c5! and Black is taking over.

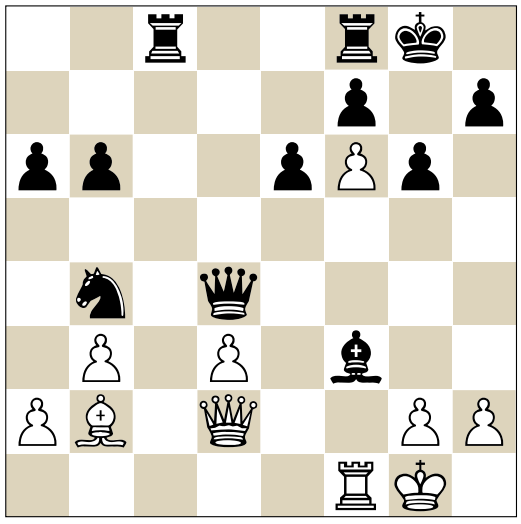
16.♖f1

Interesting was 16.♕f2!? as the control over the a7-g1 diagonal is quite important for White, which becomes evident later on in the game.

16...♘xd3 17.cxd3 ♖c8!?

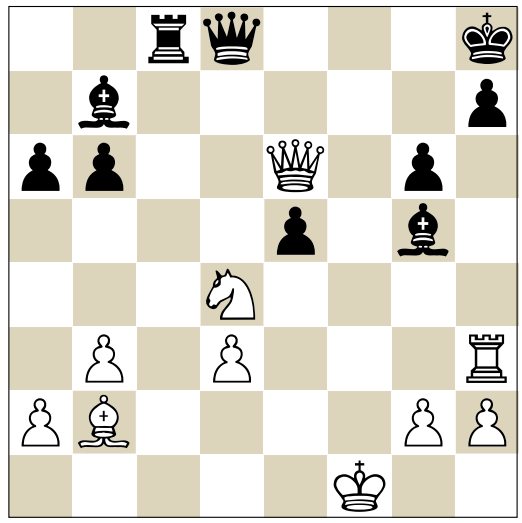


18.♘e4 Now White has achieved quite a harmonious set-up. But I had a clever concrete operation in my mind, using the only weak link in White's position: the a7-g1 diagonal. It was crucial to play 18.♕f2! and take the important diagonal under control. Here Black is given some time, but the threats are nevertheless quite serious, as ♘e4 is coming: 18...♖f8 19.♘e4 dxe5 20.fxe5 and now Black can try to defend actively or passively, but both methods seem to be not entirely satisfactory. To begin with, 20...f5 looks good, but it has quite a few flaws: (20...♕d7 is the attempt to defend passively: 21.♘f6+ (21.♖f3 fails to the clever 21...♘b4! 22.♘f6+ ♗xf6 23.exf6 ♗xf3 24.♕d2 which is almost mate, but not entirely: 24...♕xd4+!! (24...♔h8? 25.♘xf3 is game over)



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

25.♗xd4 ♖c2 and Black saves the day: 26.♕h6 ♖xg2+ 27.♔h1 ♖f2+ 28.♔g1 ♖g2+) 21...♘xf6 22.exf6 ♗c5 and now White has no immediate way to mate, as he has to take Black's counterthreats into account as well (...♖c2 sometimes). However, strong is 23.b4!, forcing 23...♗xd4 24.♗xd4 and in the long run White's threats are more effective. White's plan may include ♖g3 followed by ♕e3 or an even more sophisticated defence of the g2-square: ♔h1! followed by ♖g1) 21.♘xe6 (21.exf6 also seems promising: 21...♘xf6 22.♘g5! and now the complications start: 22...♘g4 23.♕e2 ♖xf1+ 24.♔xf1 e5 25.♕xg4 ♗xg5 26.♕e6+ ♔h8, when White can capture either on e5 or on g6, which eventually will lead to an opposite-coloured bishop endgame. For example:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

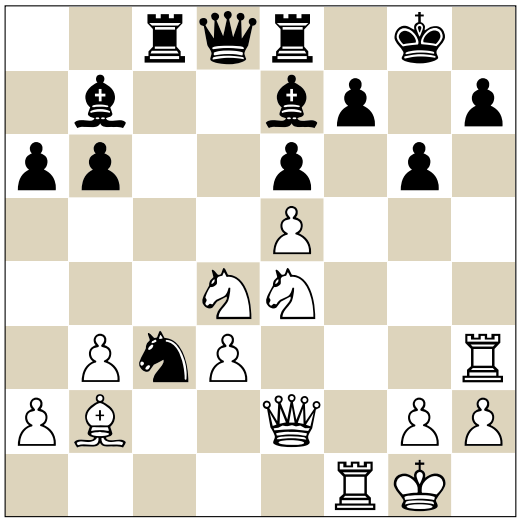
27.♕xg6 ♕f6+ 28.♕xf6+ ♗xf6 29.♖h6! exd4 30.♖xf6 ♖c2 31.♖f2 ♖xf2+ 32.♔xf2 ♔g8 33.♗xd4 b5 when it's a close call) 21...fxe4 22.♘xf8 ♕xf8 23.♕d2! and now Black can try his luck with a queen sacrifice: 23...♕xf1+!? (23...♕g7 24.dxe4 ♗b4 25.♕d3 wins for White) 24.♔xf1 e3 25.♕e2 ♘f4 26.♕xe3 ♗xg2+ 27.♔g1 ♗xh3 28.♕xf4 ♖f8, when for a moment it seems that White's king is in danger, but after 29.♕c4+ ♔g7 30.e6+ ♔g8 31.d4! it turns out that the queen is covering the f1-square nicely and that Black has to resign himself to a

pretty sad defence after something like 31...b5 (31...♖f5 unfortunately fails to 32.♗a3!!) 32.♕d3 ♗xe6 33.♕e3 ♔f7.

And so it seems that White had some edge after 18.♕f2 and that the defensive set-up that I chose was not optimal.

18...dxe5 19.fxe5 ♘c3!

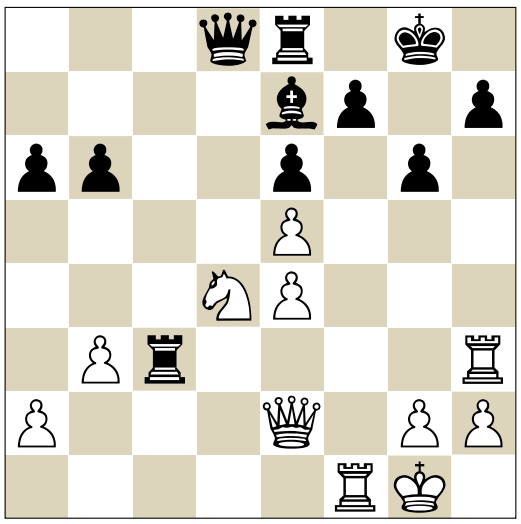
Well-timed counterplay.



20.♗xc3 20.♕f2? runs into 20...♕xd4!. **20...♗xe4 21.dxe4**

21.♘xe6 fxe6 22.dxe4 seems quite harmless: 22...♖f8 and the pawn is no big deal.

21...♖xc3! Here I saw a very, very devilish trap, which my opponent fell for. I remember I was very happy with the depth of my calculation.



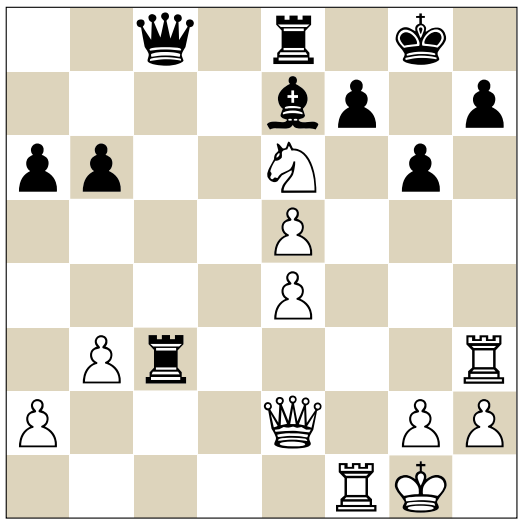
22.♘xe6

This seems very strong, but I have a counter-strike.

Instead, 22.♖xc3 ♕xd4+ 23.♕f2 ♗c5! leads to equality.

22...♕c8!

In itself the move doesn't seem difficult, but the point comes after 23.♕f2. Soon my opponent started shaking his head...

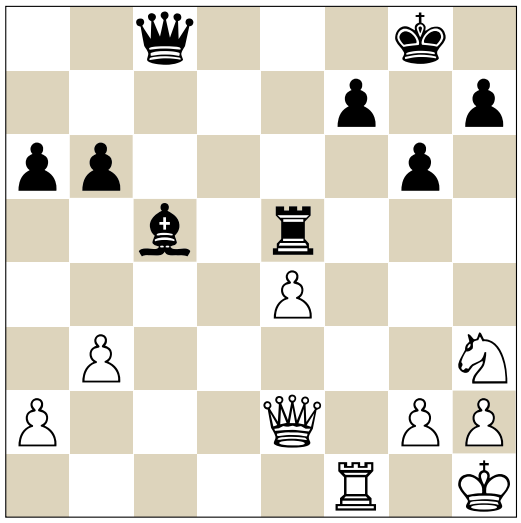


23.♘f4?

Admitting failure, White agrees to play for two results.

The point after 23.♕f2! was 23...♖f8!! and it turns out that everything is under control. However, in actual fact, White has a brilliant way to save himself here, which my opponent quite understandably missed: 24.♕d2!! (threatening many things) 24...♖xh3 25.♘xf8, with equality, as the knight can always escape from f8 via the d7-square.

23...♗c5+ 24.♔h1 ♖xh3 25.♘xh3 ♖xe5 Now Black simply has a slight advantage.



26.♘f4 ♕b7 27.♖e1 ♗f8 28.♘d3 ♖e8 29.e5

This doesn't seem necessary, but the pawn is quite weak on e4 as well.

29...♗g7 30.h3 ♕d5

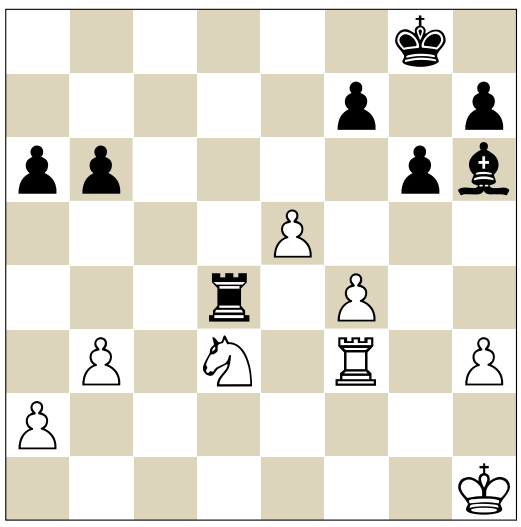
Black keeps some pressure, but I remember I wasn't that sure about my winning chances. In fact, the position is very unpleasant for White and here my opponent decided to enter a worse endgame.

31.♕f3?!

31.♕e3 b5 keeps some edge for Black in the middlegame as well.

31...♕xf3 32.gxf3 ♖d8 33.♖e3 ♖d4! 34.f4 ♗h6 35.♖f3

Now it's time for his majesty to enter the game.



35...♔f8! 36.♔g2 ♔e7 37.♔f2 ♔e6 38.♔e3 ♔d5!

Black is just in time to keep his rook in the dominant position.

39.♘f2 ♗g7 40.♔e2 ♗h6 41.f5?!

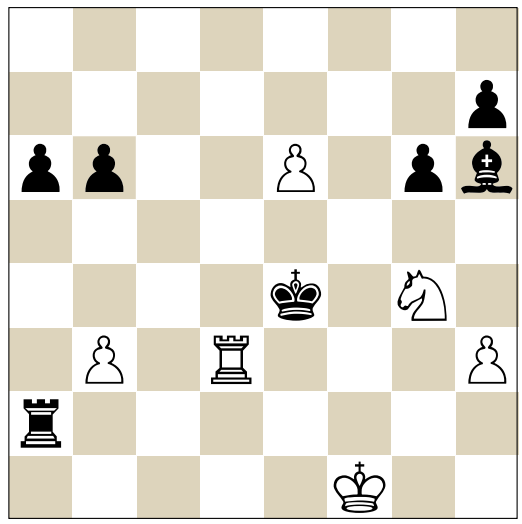
My opponent didn't want to repeat the position, when I might have gone for ...g5 or might have continued manoeuvring with ... ♗f8.

41...♖d2+ 42.♔e1 ♖xa2 43.e6 ♖a1+ 44.♔e2 ♖a2+ 45.♔f1

Again, my opponent does it.

45...fxe6 46.♖d3+ ♔e5 47.♘g4+ ♔e4 48.fxe6

And here I had the chance to once again outcalculate my opponent.



48...♔xd3 49.♘e5+ ♔e3 50.e7

Or 50.♘c4+ ♔f3 51.♘e5+ ♔g3 52.e7 ♖f2+ 53.♔e1 ♖f8 and wins.

50...♖f2+ 51.♔e1 ♖f8!

Missed by Mateusz. The pawn is stopped and White is lost.

52.♘c4+ ♔d3 53.exf8♗ ♗xf8 54.♘xb6 ♔c3

White resigned.

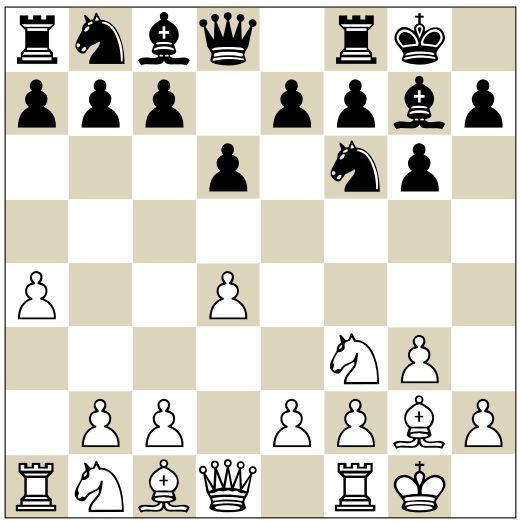
10

A49
Oleg Romanishin
Anish Giri
Wijk aan Zee 2009

Before this round I had drawn 6 games and lost 1. Needless to say, in order to have any chance to fight for the last and so desired GM norm, I had to start winning games.
My opponent was not the most suitable one for my plans: the experienced and very solid GM Oleg Romanishin.

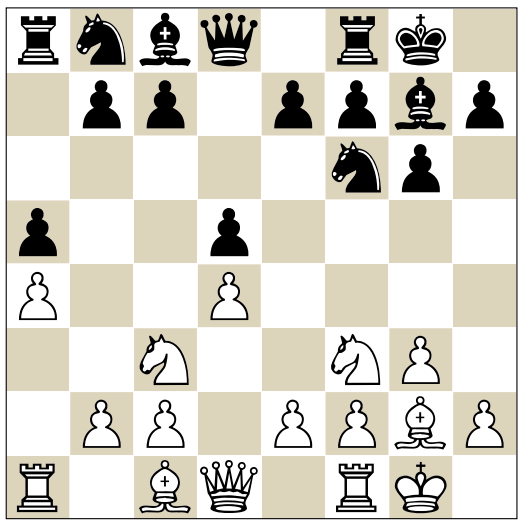
1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.g3 g6 3.♗g2 ♗g7 4.0-0 0-0 5.d4 d6 6.a4!?

A pet line of my opponent.



6...a5 7.♘c3 d5

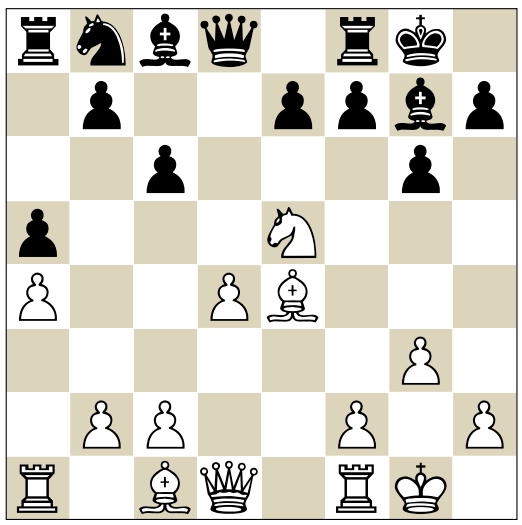
I had prepared this idea (including the point after 8.♖e1) with my second Jan-Willem de Jong, the boyfriend of Bianca Muhren, who had just started her career as the presenter of the daily videos on the tournament website.
Before the event I had done some training with Jan-Willem and Daniel Fridman and in Wijk aan Zee Jan-Willem would regularly drop by to check in on me.



8.♘e5

In the past my opponent had played 8.♖e1 here. To which I had found a clever idea: 8...♗f5 9.♘h4 ♗g4! (9...♗e6 10.e4 dxe4 11.♘xe4 ♘xe4 12.♗xe4 c6 13.c3 with a white edge was Romanishin-Golubev, 1998) 10.h3 and only now 10...♗e6, the point being that after 11.e4 dxe4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.♗xe4 c6 the pawn on h3 is hanging as well.

8...c6 9.e4 dxe4 10.♘xe4 ♘xe4 11.♗xe4

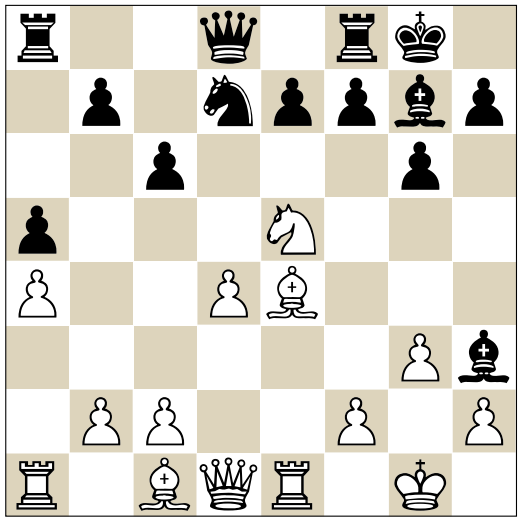


11...♗h3

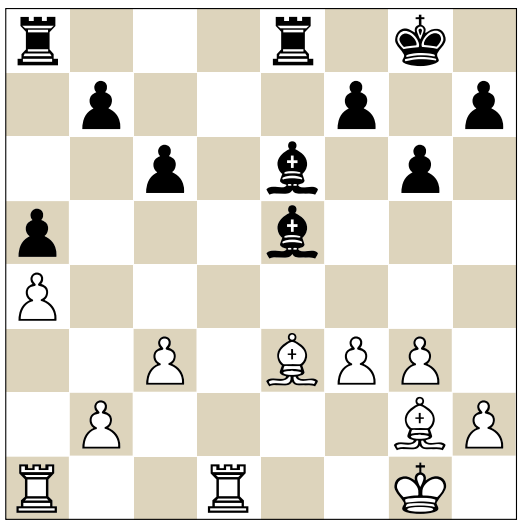
Also interesting was 11...c5!?.

12.♖e1 ♘d7

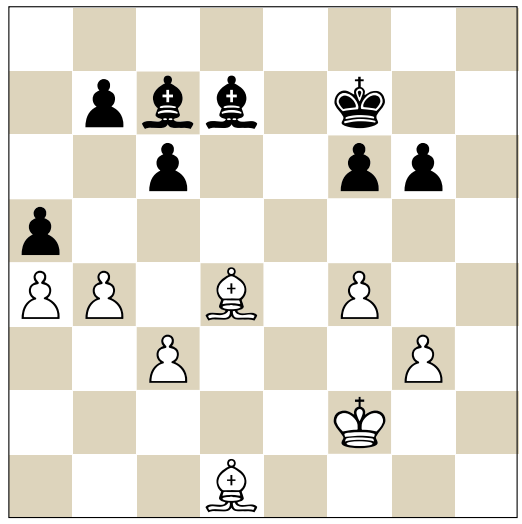
This equalizes.



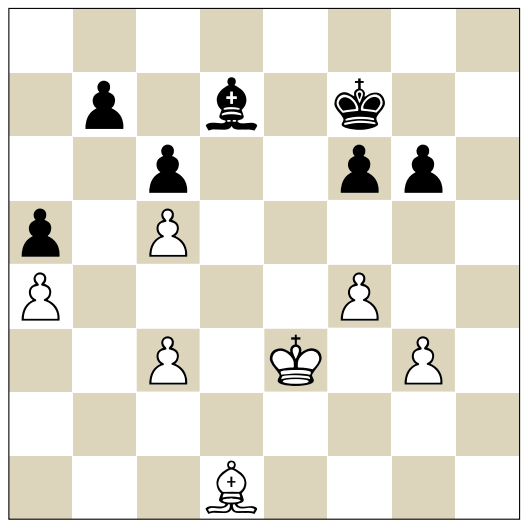
13.♘xd7 ♕xd7 14.c3 e5
At first I was happy about the way the game developed, but then I realized that I actually wanted to win. Well, I decided to keep on playing.
15.dxe5 ♕xd1 16.♖xd1 ♗xe5 17.♗e3 ♖fe8 18.♗g2 ♗g4 19.f3 ♗e6
Somewhere around here I refused a draw and although nothing happened pretty much for the next 20 moves, suddenly I got a micro-chance.



20.♔f2 ♗c7 21.♗f1 ♖ed8 22.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 23.♗e2 ♗b3 24.f4 h5 25.♗d4 h4 26.♗e3 hxg3+ 27.hxg3 ♔g7 28.♗d4+ f6 29.♗f3 ♖h8 30.♔g2 ♔f7 31.♖a3 ♗e6 32.♖a1 ♖d8 33.♖h1 ♔g7 34.♖e1 ♔f7 35.♖h1 ♔g7 36.♖e1 ♖e8 37.♔f2 ♗f7 38.♖xe8 ♗xe8 39.b4 ♗d7 40.♗d1 ♔f7 The previous moves hardly require any comments. At first I had some hopes for my bishop on b3, but eventually everything got exchanged and the position by this point is a dead draw.



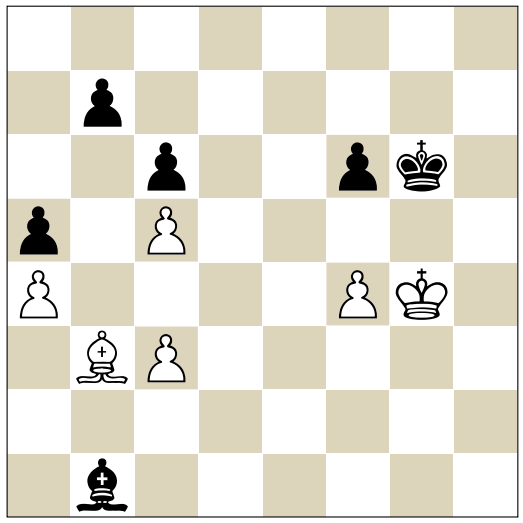
41.♔e3?! The position is still quite dead, but this is the already mentioned micro-inaccuracy.
41...♗d6!
Forcing.
42.♗c5 ♗xc5+ 43.bxc5
And now the a4-pawn is a little vulnerable. This is not even close to anything for Black, but somehow I managed to gradually win this dead drawn endgame.



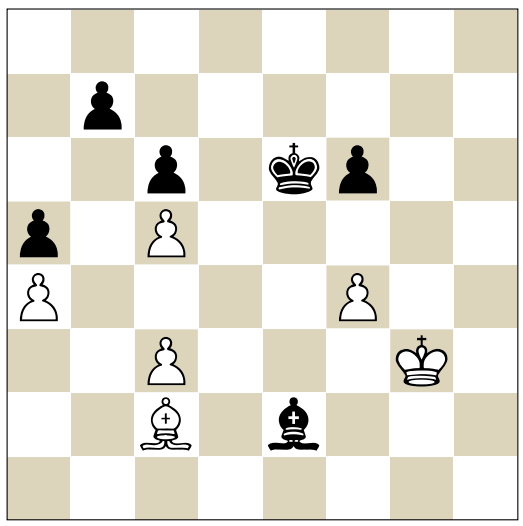
43...g5! 44.♗h5+ ♔e7 45.♔e4 gxf4 46.gxf4

46.♔xf4!? looks very drawish.

46...♗e6 47.♗d1 ♗g8 48.♔d4 ♗h7 49.♗b3 ♗f5 50.♔e3 ♔f8 51.♔d4 ♔g7 52.♔e3 ♗b1 53.♔f3 ♔g6 54.♔g4 My king fails to break through in the first try.



54...♗f5+ 55.♔f3 ♗d3 56.♔g4 ♗e2+ 57.♔g3 ♗d3 58.♔g4 ♗e2+ 59.♔g3 ♔f5 60.♗c2+ ♔e6

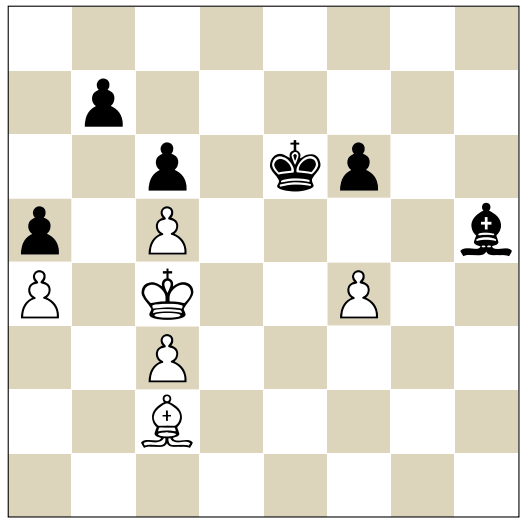


61.♗b3+

My king fails to break through in the second try.

61...♔d7 62.♔f2 ♗g4 63.♔e3 ♗f5 64.♔d4 ♔c7 65.♗d1 ♗e6 66.♗c2 ♗d5 67.♗d1 ♔d7 68.♗g4+ ♔e7 69.♗d1 ♔f7 70.♗c2 ♔e6 71.♔e3 ♗g2 72.♔d4 ♗h3 73.♗d3 ♗g4 74.♗c2 ♗h5 75.♔c4

White had changed his set-up somewhat, having his king on the d4-c4-squares, which gave me the opportunity to eventually switch back, using some very sophisticated zugzwangs.



75...♗e2+ 76.♔d4 ♗g4!

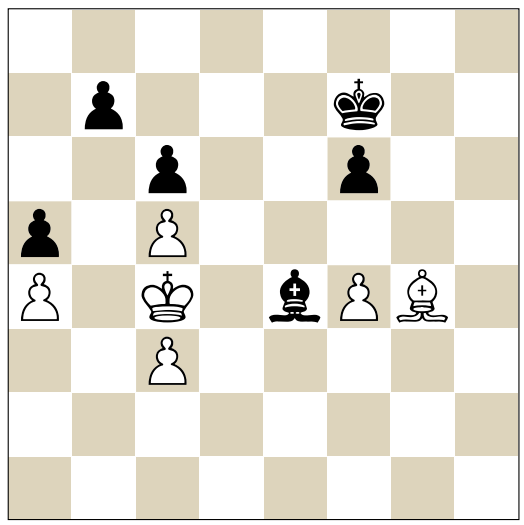
Zugzwang number one. The bishop can't move, because of ♗d1. 77.♗b3+ is met by 77...♔f5.

77.♔c4 ♗f5! 78.♗d1 ♗e4!

The king once again is ready to go to f5.

79.♗g4+ ♔f7!

Now the king comes to f5 from g6.

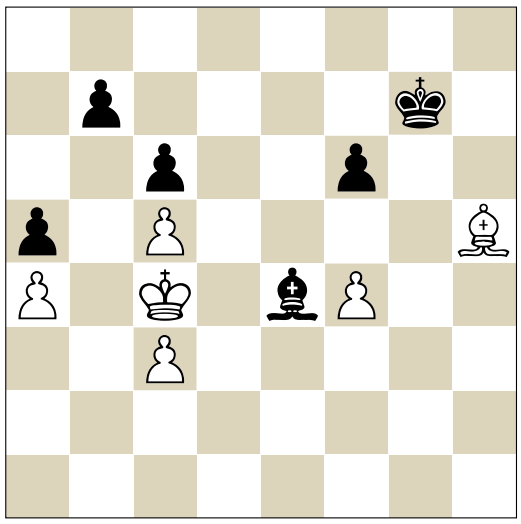


80.♗h5+?

80.♗c8! would force a draw, though:

80...♗c2 81.♗xb7 ♗xa4 82.♗c8 ♔g6 83.♗g4 ♗c2 84.♗f3 ♗a4 85.♗g4 and Black can't make any progress whatsoever due to the weak c6-pawn.

80...♔g7!



81.♗d1?

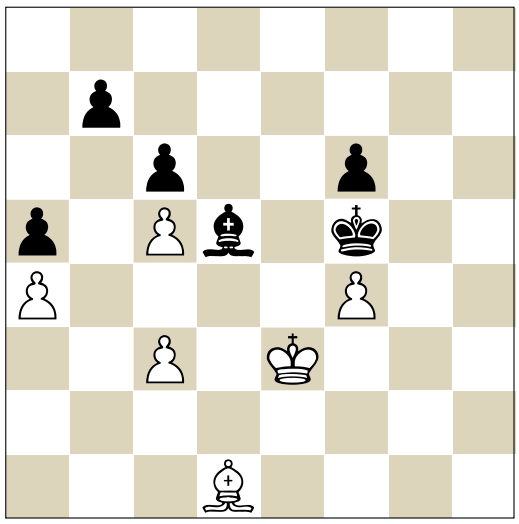
White had to go for the b7-pawn with 81.♗g4!.

81...♔g6!

Now the king enters.

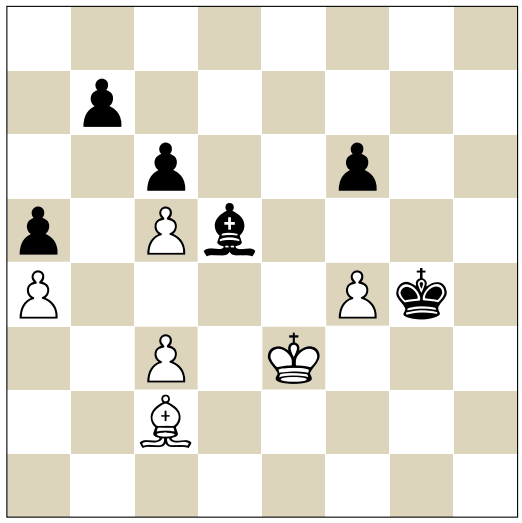
82.♔d4 ♔f5! 83.♔e3 ♗d5!

Try number three and suddenly the king breaks through. It's another zugzwang, the bishop has to guard the a4-pawn.



84.♗c2+ ♔g4

With the king entering, the position is winning.



85.♗d1+ ♔g3 86.♗c2 ♗e6!

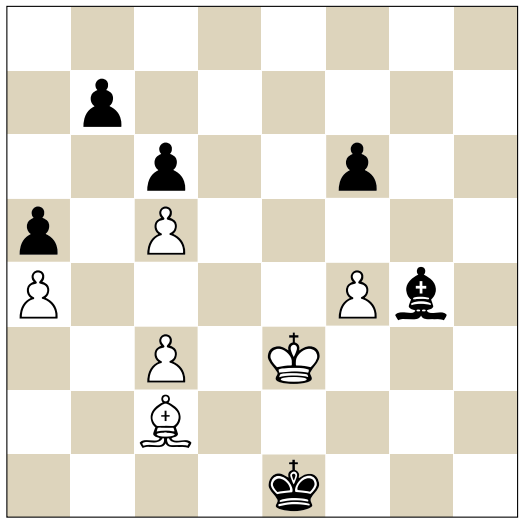
Preventing any counterplay.

87.♗d1 ♔g2!

The king moves around.

88.♗c2 ♔f1 89.♔f3 ♔e1 90.♔e3 ♗g4

The final zugzwang. The pawn on a4 is after all going to be lost.



91.♗g6

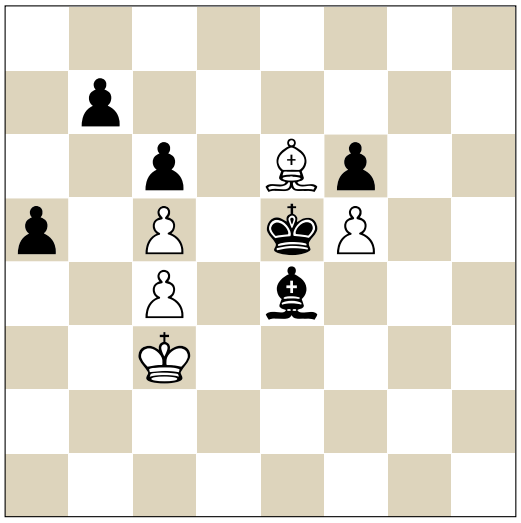
Or 91.♗b3 ♗f5 and wins.

91...♗d1 92.♔d3 ♗xa4 93.c4 ♔f2 94.♗f7 ♔f3 95.f5 ♔f4 96.♗e6 ♗d1 97.♗c8 ♗f3 98.♔c3 ♔e5 99.♗e6 ♗e4

White resigned.

Needless to say, this victory was an emotional boost, after which I won 4 more games in a row! Obviously,

quite some luck was involved in that streak too, but then when isn't it?

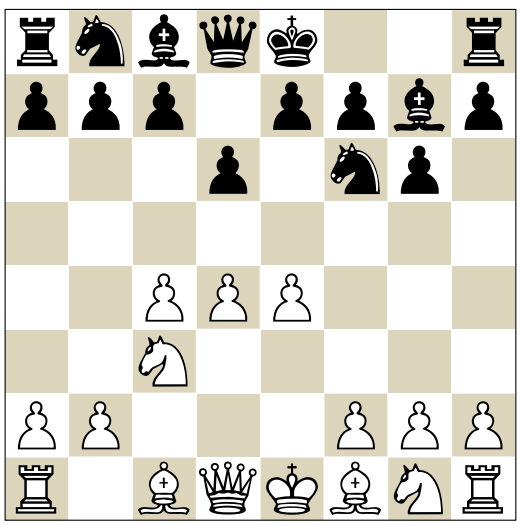


11

E99
Anish Giri
Friso Nijboer
Haaksbergen 2009

This was the very first Dutch Championship I participated in. Till this point Friso Nijboer had been in the lead and as I was chasing him, I was quite ambitious going into this game.

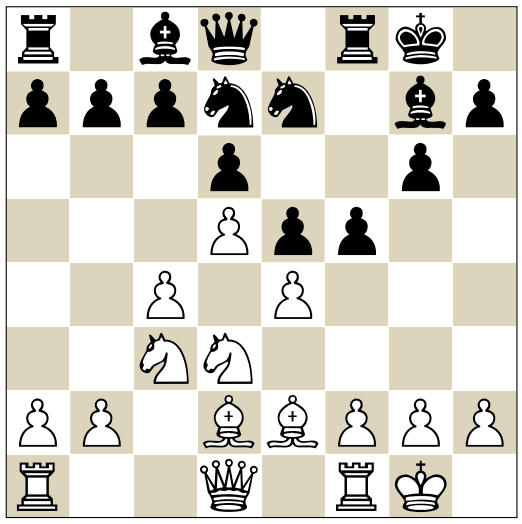
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 With Friso you always know you are in for a rough fight. The KID is one of his pet openings.



5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗e2 e5
I also played the system with 7.♗e3, but for this game I was ready for the 'main line'.

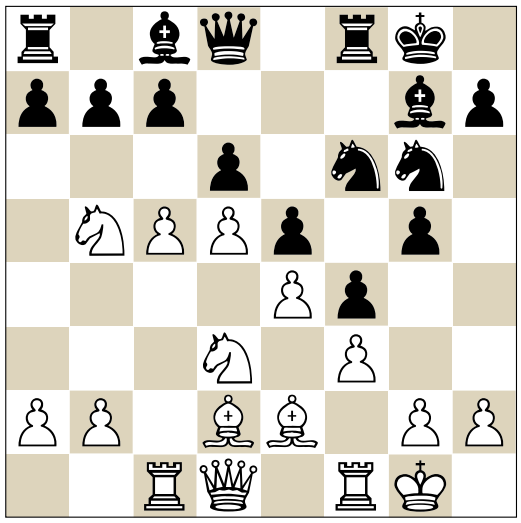
7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘e1
I was going for the most critical variation and had done some serious preparation there.

9...♘d7 10.♘d3 f5 11.♗d2



11...♘f6
Nowadays, 11...fxe4 has become popular, clarifying the situation in the centre. White should be slightly better, but Black has his chances and I even managed to win a nice game in this variation as Black against a weaker opponent in the French League in 2011.

12.f3 f4 13.c5 g5 14.♖c1 ♘g6 15.♘b5!?
I don't know who invented this line, but I am of the strong opinion that it was my friend Ali Bitalzadeh, an Iranian-born Dutch IM, who played in this tournament as well. He was a good friend of mine and for a while he was sharing some of his great ideas with me. Ali was the one who crushed me in the King's Indian, which made me give it up for quite a long while.



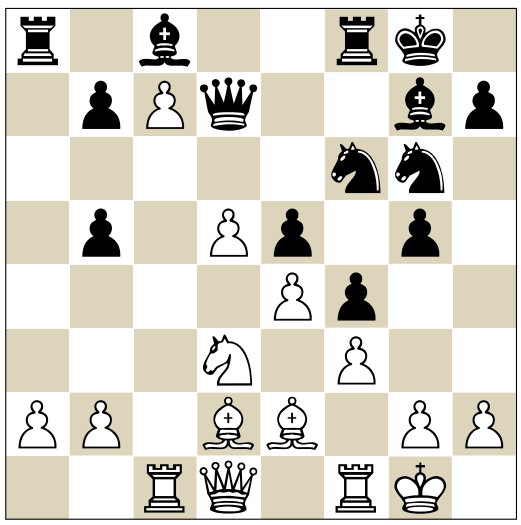
In the past people thought it was necessary to take on d6 right away and after 15.cxd6 cxd6 16.♘b5 ♖f7 17.♕c2 ♘e8 18.a4 a very complex battle begins. White is trying to open up the queenside and eventually neutralize the c8-bishop, while Black is going to play for the ...g4 push. The standard plan here is ...♗f8, ...♖g7, ...h5, ...g4, which I managed to employ on many occasions as a young KID player myself.

15...a6?!

By now the theory is a lot further and the main-line goes 15...♖f7! 16.♗a5 b6 17.cxd6 cxd6 18.♗e1 a6 (18...g4!?) 19.♘c3 a5 with an unclear position. Eventually the game Giri-Grischuk, Amber 2011, was drawn.

16.cxd6! The point.

16...axb5 17.dxc7 ♕d7



18.♗b4?!

White has also other ways of developing his initiative, perhaps better ones...

18.♕b3! ♘e8 19.♘c5 ♕d6 20.♘e6 is how the game Biriukov-Solovjov, St. Petersburg 1999, went. New is the well forgotten old...

Here, by the way, White has an advantage, which was proven in a correspondence game played 10 years later.

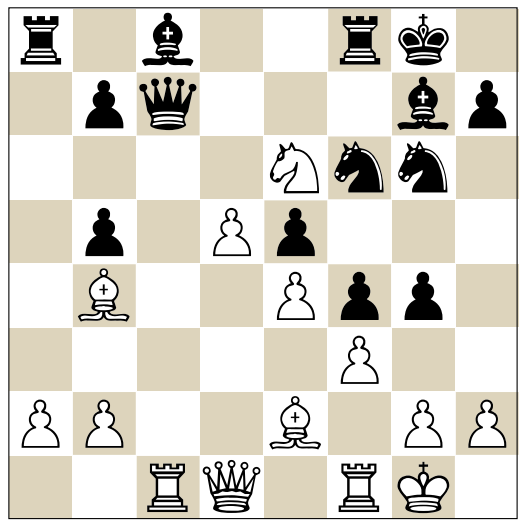
18...g4

Aiming for some play on the kingside.

19.♘c5

Taking the exchange on f8 is counterproductive. Instead, getting the knight on e6 is a better idea.

19...♕xc7 20.♘e6



20...♕f7?

The main line of my analysis was 20...♕b6+ 21.♗c5 ♕a5 22.b4! , or at least that's my feeling: 22...♕a3 23.♘c7 ♗d7 with a highly unclear position.

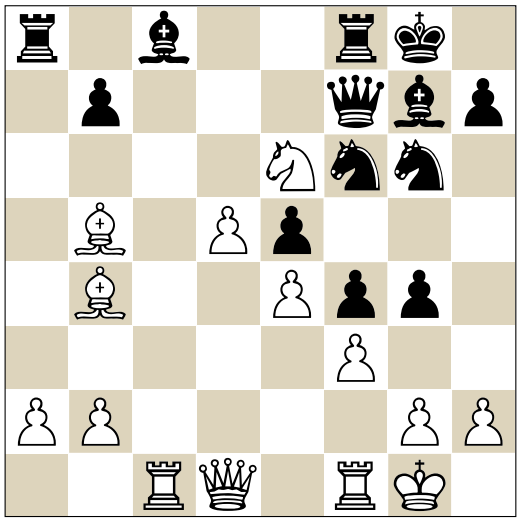
Maybe I mixed up something in my preparation, because 18.♕b3 seems just a lot stronger.

On the other hand, back in 2009, when this position was new and

Houdini hadn't yet been invented, it was also a lot harder to analyse.
20...♕b8!? is quite decent as well. The queen is safe here and will get back into the game quite soon.

21.♗xb5!

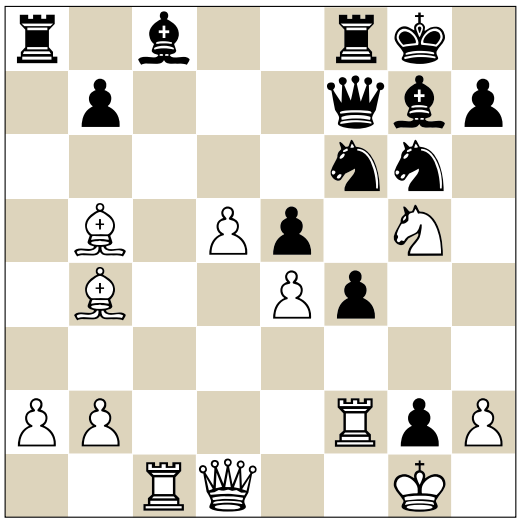
Now suddenly the queen is about to get trapped. Friso, however, held a different opinion about my threats.



21...gxf3!?

Black's position is quite bad anyhow, so my opponent decided to confuse matters.
21...♗d7 is quite silly, when after 22.♗xd7 ♘xd7 23.♗xf8 ♘gxf8 24.♕b3 Black doesn't have enough attacking resources, while his queenside collapses. The knight on e6 is also quite a serious pain in the neck.

22.♘g5! fxg2 23.♖f2

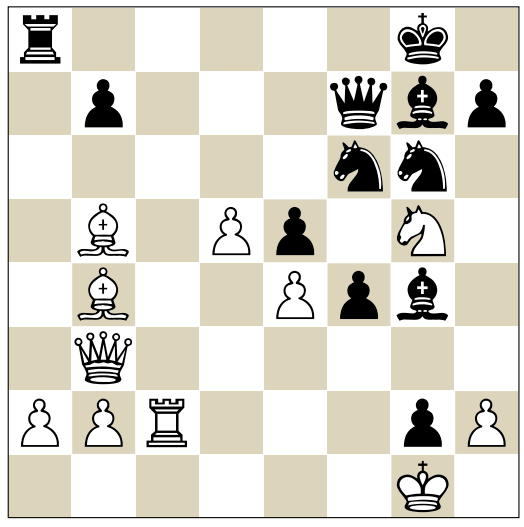


23...♗g4

23...♘xe4!? was another attempt, but after 24.♘xf7 ♘xf2 25.♔xf2 ♖xf7 26.♗e8 ♖f6 27.d6 Black doesn't have enough time to create a dangerous pawn mass in the centre. Though it would still be possible to pose a problem or two.

24.♕b3 ♖fc8 25.♖fc2 ♖xc2 26.♖xc2

The queen is still trapped!



26...♘h4 27.♘xf7 ♔xf7

The rest is a matter of precise moves, which I managed.
27...♘f3+ 28.♔xg2 ♘d4 was a better practical chance, but anyway Black doesn't even come close to having enough compensation for the absence of the queen.

28.♖c7+ ♔g6 29.h3 f3

Hoping for some study-like mates.

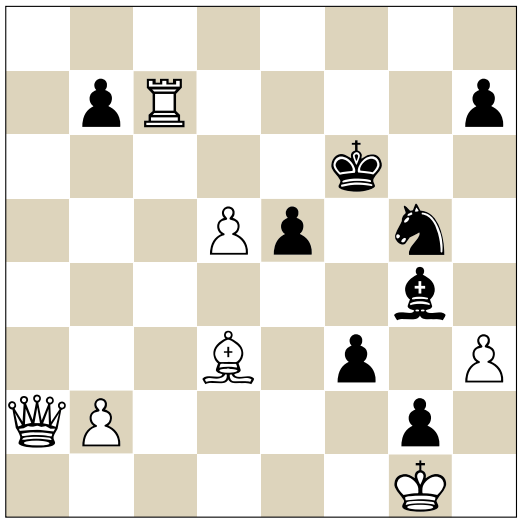
30.♗e1!

There are no threats whatsoever.

30...♗h6 31.♗xh4 ♖xa2

The final desperado.

32.♕xa2 ♗e3+ 33.♗f2 ♗xf2+ 34.♔xf2 ♘xe4+ 35.♔g1 ♘g5 36.♗d3+ ♔f6

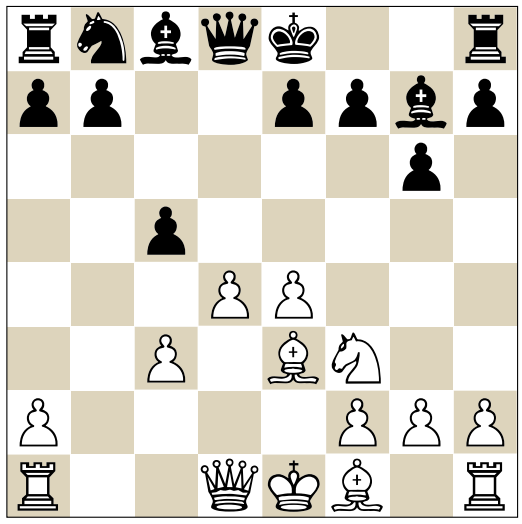


37.♖xh7!
Curtains. Black resigned.
After this game I took the lead and finished the tournament very confidently, taking my first Dutch title!

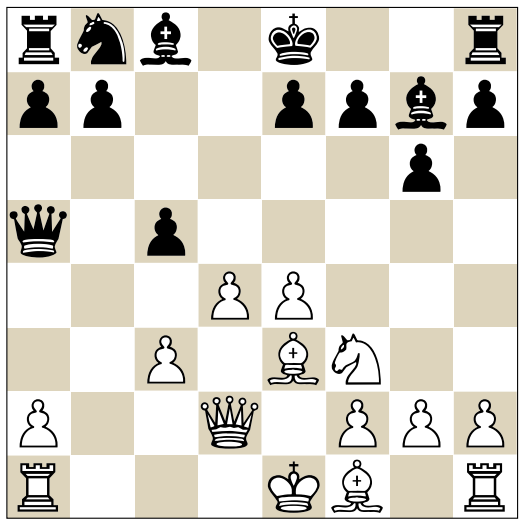
12

D85
Anish Giri
Emil Sutovsky
Wijk aan Zee 2010

This game was played in one of my most felicitous tournaments, the 2010 Wijk aan Zee B-Group. I started with two victories and with this instructive win I managed to develop my lead even further.
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♘f3 c5 8.♗e3
I had studied this variation with Daniel Fridman for a couple of days. He came to our place, told a couple of jokes during dinner, in the daytime we shuffled around the pieces on the wooden bord a little, we found a novelty here, a novelty there... I couldn't have imagined that it would bring me two full points just a week later.

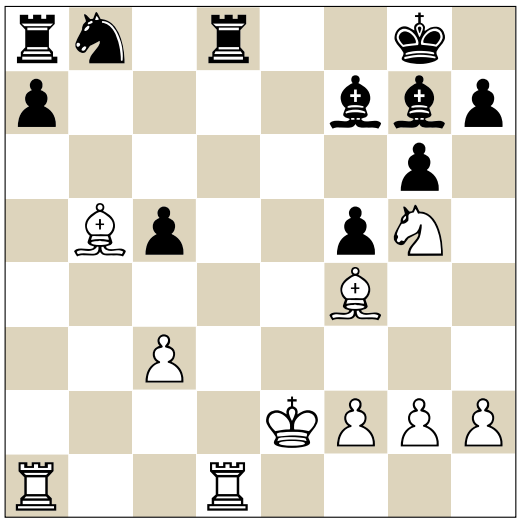


8...♕a5 9.♕d2



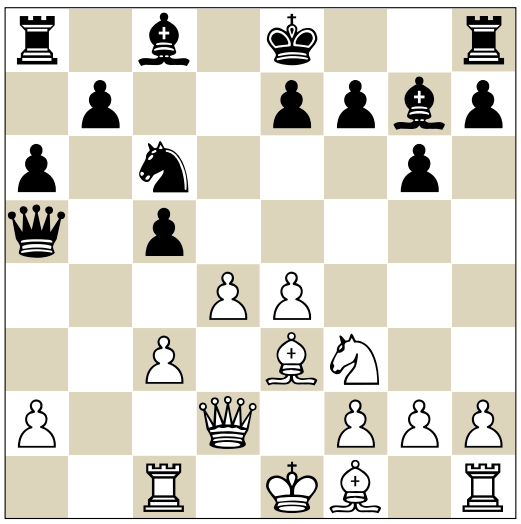
9...♘c6
It is quite well known that the pawn on a6 does Black no good in the endgame. The weakness of the b6-square is quite crucial.
Further on in the tournament 9...0-0 was played by David Howell, who followed a recent game which went 10.♖c1 ♖d8 11.d5 e6 12.♗g5 f6 13.♗f4 f5 14.♗c4! ♕a4 15.♕e2 b5 16.♗xb5 ♕xe4 and now one of our novelties hit David: 17.dxe6 and after 17...♗xe6 18.♘g5! ♕xe2+ 19.♔xe2! ♗xa2 20.♖a1! ♗f7

21.♖hd1 White was winning. The b8-knight just never got into the game.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

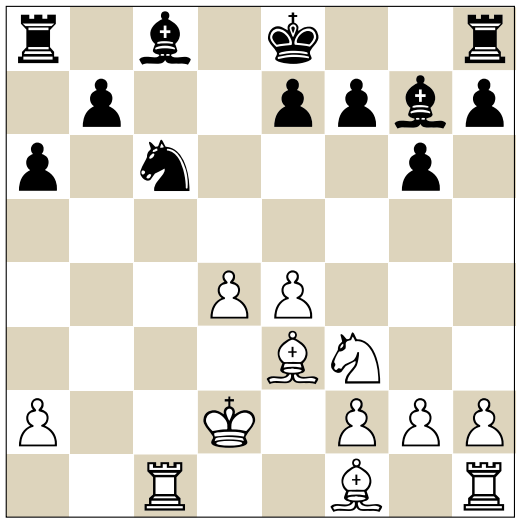
10.♖b1 a6 11.♖c1!



11...cxd4

Later that year, I could use yet another idea of ours: 11...f5 12.dxc5!?. I remember making this move on the training board, playing a couple more moves together with Daniel and then he mumbled: 'OK, a little better.' 12...fxe4 13.♘d4 ♗d7 14.♗e2 0-0-0 15.♘b3! ♕a4 16.0-0 and I managed to beat Kanarek quite easily at the European Championship in 2010. White shifts to the b-file.

12.cxd4 ♕xd2+ 13.♔xd2

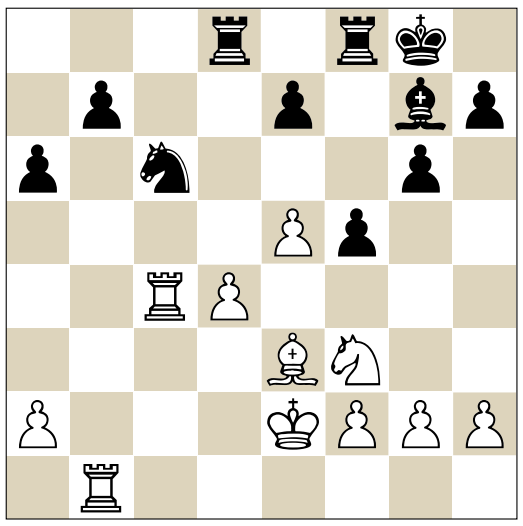


13...f5

A very dull variation, not at all in the style of my opponent. However, he was probably following a well-known Russian saying, which goes 'with the youth into the endgame!' 13...e6!? keeps some more dynamic options and is a highly relevant move for the theory of the whole variation.

14.e5 ♗e6 15.♗c4 ♗xc4 16.♖xc4 0-0 17.♔e2 ♖ad8 18.♖b1

Here, in this well-known position, Emil started to think, but his creativity couldn't be fully unleashed in this simple position.



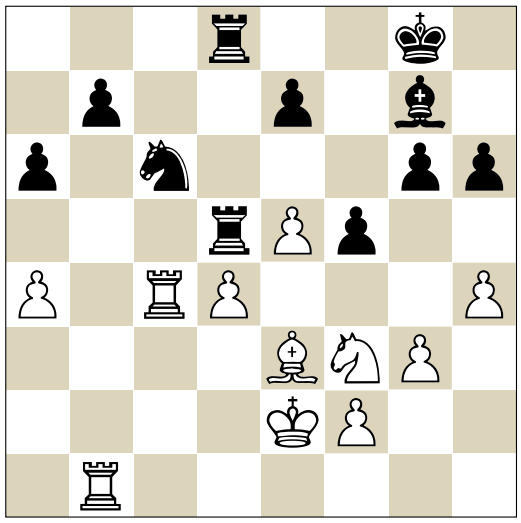
18...♖d5?!

Using the fact the the b7-pawn is taboo. But the rook doesn't really

have an opportunity to activate itself anyway.

The usual move is 18...♖d7 when White has a slight advantage. The bishop on g7 is out of play and White has beautiful squares for his rooks, on c4 and b6. All he needs eventually is a knight regroupment and the black position will break. For example: 19.g3 e6 20.h4 h6 21.♖b6 ♖fd8 22.♔f1!? ♔f7 23.♔g2 Black runs out of moves and White will eventually prepare ♘e1, for example after 23...♗f8 24.♖c1 With the idea ♖cb1. 24...♖c7 25.♘g1 Followed by ♘e2, from where the knight has even more flexibility and can pressure the e6-square from f4.

19.a4 ♖fd8 20.g3 h6 21.h4



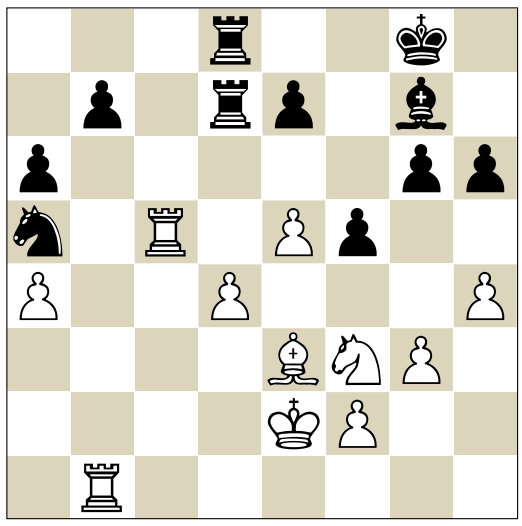
21...♘a5?

Again this display of activity is counterproductive.

21...e6 22.♖b6 ♖8d7 can be met with either the usual ♔f1, preparing the eventual familiar manoeuvre, or perhaps the dynamic 23.♖cxc6! bxc6 24.♖xc6, using the fact that Black wasn't in time with ...♔f7 and will lose one more pawn now for the sacrificed exchange.

22.♖c7 ♖5d7 23.♖c5!

By now I already saw the coming forced sequence.



23...♖d5 24.♖xd5 ♖xd5 25.♖b6! ♔f7 26.♗d2!?

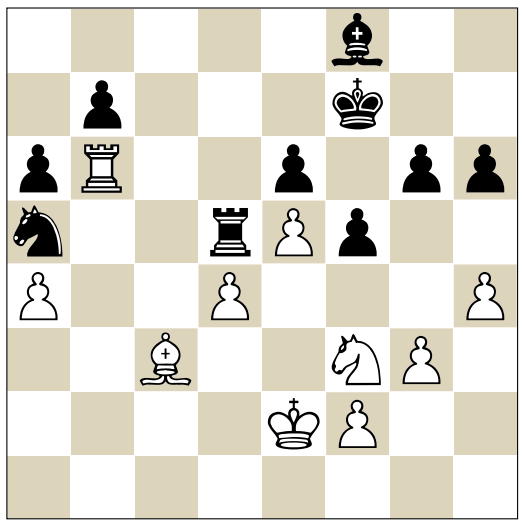
Regrouping the bishop first.

26...♗f8?

26...♘c6 27.♗c3 ♘d8 was essential. Black is terribly passive, but is not losing by force yet.

27.♗c3 e6

Now I found a nice knight manoeuvre to clinch the game.

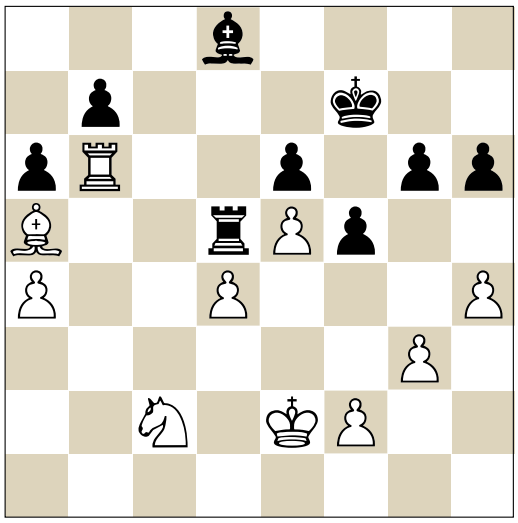


28.♘e1! ♗e7 29.♘c2!

The threat is ♘e3. At the same time the knight protects the d4-pawn, which is important in the variation 29...♘c6 30.♖xb7.

29...♗d8 30.♗xa5!

The point.



30...♖xa5

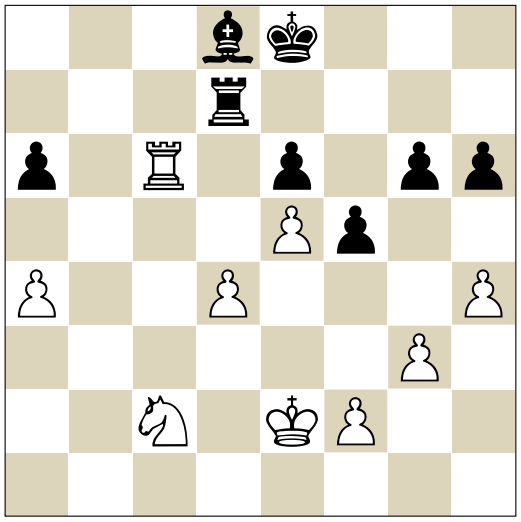
30...♗xb6 31.♗xb6 is hopeless, too. White has two pieces for the rook and a dominating position.

31.♖xb7+ ♔e8 32.♖b4!

Not allowing any counterplay.

32...♖d5 33.♖c4 ♖d7 34.♖c6

One more pawn is lost and the game is over.



34...♔f7 35.♖xa6 ♖b7 36.a5 ♖b2 37.♔d3 ♖a2 38.♖a7+

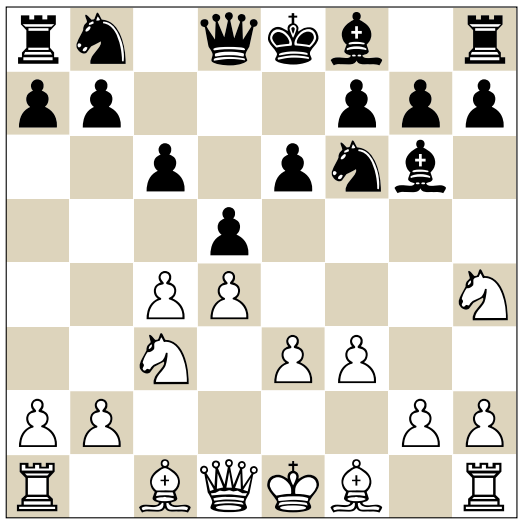
Black resigned. A very simple, but sweet victory. Needless to say it was quite welcome, considering the tournament situation: it was important not to lose the pace!

13

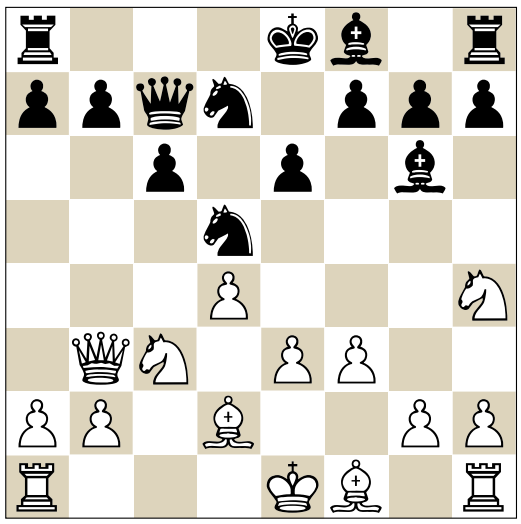
D12
Tomi Nyback
Anish Giri
Wijk aan Zee 2010

Following the 'simple but sweet' victory over Sutovsky, I was facing a strong GM from Finland, Tomi Nyback. It was going to be another big test, but once again things went my way.

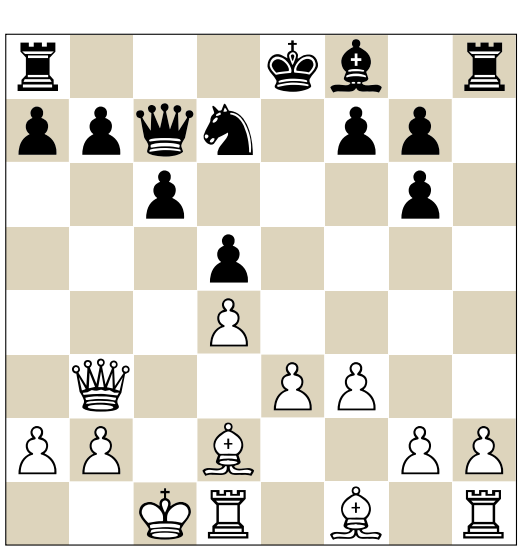
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3 ♗f5 5.♘c3 e6 6.♘h4 ♗e4 7.f3 ♗g6 I had studied this variation with my roommate at the time, Robin van Kampen, who had a good event as well, playing in the C-group. Three and a half years on we still studied the same variation, when he was my second in the 2013 Paris Grand Prix and I employed this variation twice, against Gelfand and Wang Hao.



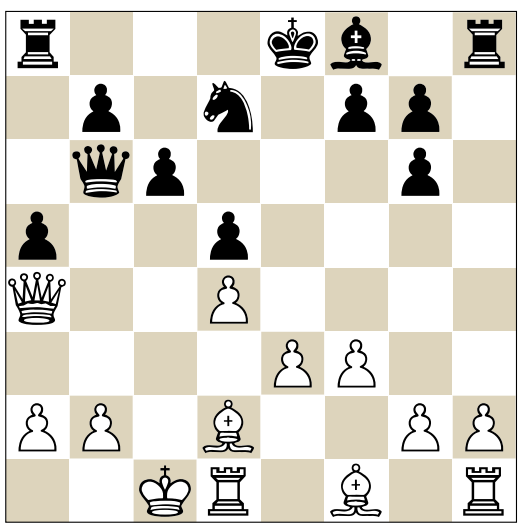
8.♕b3 ♕c7 9.♗d2 ♘bd7 In view of the capture on d5, I later preferred 9....♗e7. **10.cxd5 ♘xd5** We had been analysing a lot of lines before the game, but the consecutive capture of both pieces on d5 and g6 escaped our attention.



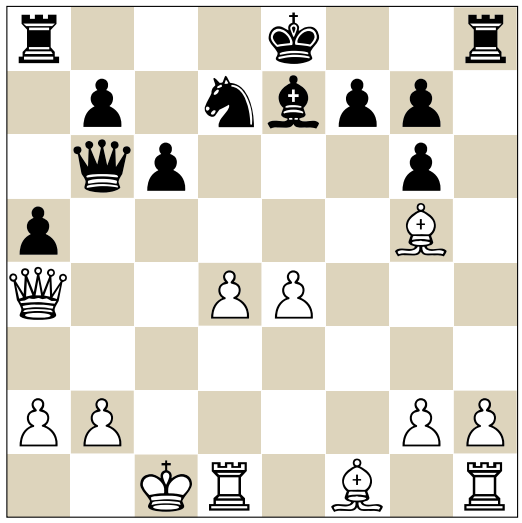
11.♘xd5!? exd5 12.♘xg6!? hxg6 13.0-0-0 At first the position looked harmless, but then I realized that with the two bishops, the eventual e4 break will be painful to meet. I decided to try and exchange one of the bishops.



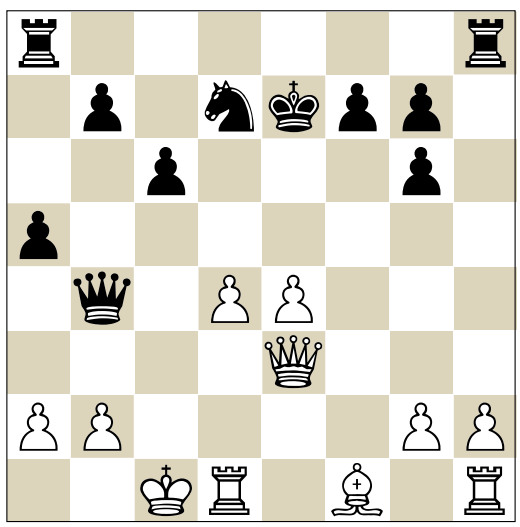
13...♕b6!? 14.♕a4 a5



15.e4
15.a3!? would prevent my plan. Perhaps Black has nothing better than to go back: 15...♕c7 Targetting the h2-pawn: 16.h3 and after 16...♗d6 Black is not doing too badly, and ready to meet e4 with ...♗f4.
15...dxe4 16.fxe4 ♗b4 17.♗g5 ♗e7
I stayed truthful to my strategic idea of exchanging the bishops, even ready to keep my king in the centre.



18.♗xe7 ♔xe7 19.♕a3+!?
Transferring the queen back to the centre.
19.♔b1 was simple and strong too.
19...♕b4 20.♕e3

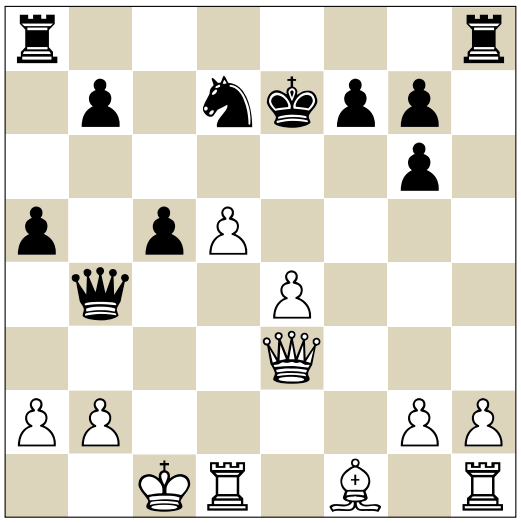


20...c5!?
I decided to fight for the e5-square,

having a very, very aesthetic idea in mind. In fact, this move seems quite dubious and now I would probably not go for it.
20...♔f8 21.♗e2 ♖e8 is safer, though after (21...♔g8!?) 22.♖hf1 Black still has no easy life.

21.d5?

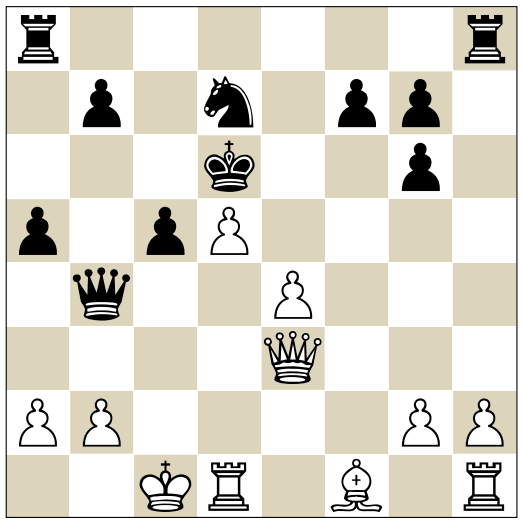
Completely missing my idea. Tomi thought Black was not in time to block his pawns, but he missed my resource.



With 21.♔b1! White keeps the tension in the centre and Black has to flee quickly: 21...♔f8! 22.♗e2 ♖e8 and long-term Black is not doing too bad, but he first has to survive the short-term, with the rook on h8 being quite strangely placed.

21...♔d6!!

After this beautiful positional move, the situation changes 180 degrees. Suddenly White has no ideas whatsoever, while Black can start a free and easy attack. My opponent, demoralized by the sudden turnaround, ended up in time-trouble and collapsed quite easily. At the same time, the black king suddenly finds himself in complete safety in the middle of the board! That day at dinner, Nigel (Short) came by and, staying true to himself, said something which doesn't pass through the strict censorship of this story, but which was highly appreciated by the two teenagers sitting at the table. To sum it up, Nigel liked this move. A lot.



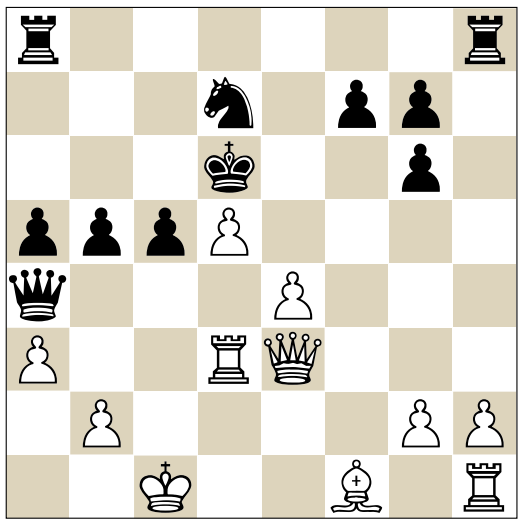
22.a3 ♕a4! 22...♕b6 would allow 23.a4!, blocking the queenside.

23.♖d3

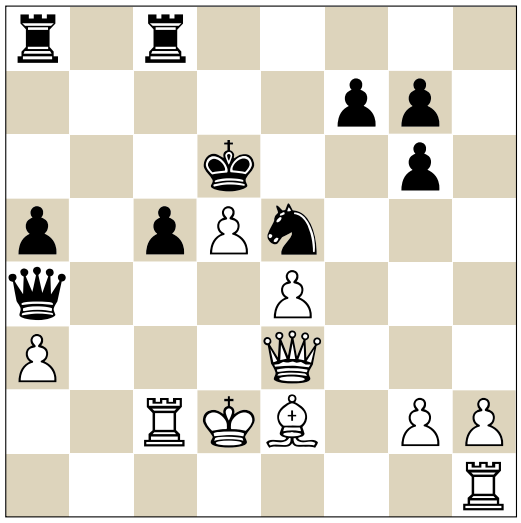
My opponent probably didn't play the best way, but it is quite hard to generate any counterplay, as the blockade of the d6-e5-squares is unbreakable. Unfortunately for White, his light-squared bishop can't contribute anything at all.

23...b5!

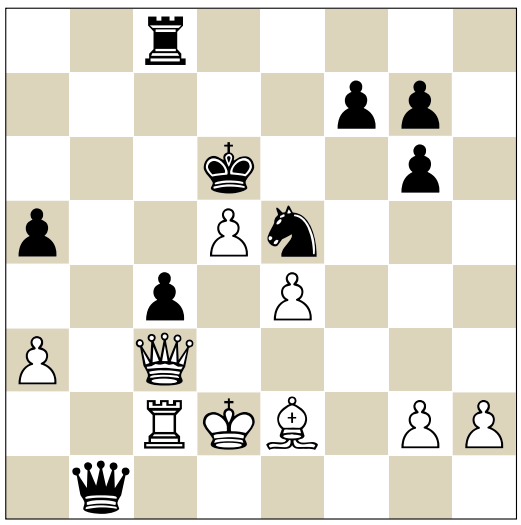
Another beautiful move, not appreciated by the blind computer.



24.♖c3 ♖hc8 25.♗e2 ♘e5 26.♔d2 White doesn't know what to do and decides to try and escape from the pawn assault. He is too slow though. **26...b4** Time to start the attack. **27.♖c2 bxa3 28.bxa3**



28...♖ab8 After 28...♕d4+! the endgame is also winning for Black, but in time-trouble I went for the kill. **29.♖hc1 c4 30.♖c3 ♖b2+ 31.♖1c2 ♕b5** Building up the pressure. **32.♖xb2 ♕xb2+ 33.♖c2 ♕b1!?** Hinting at the e4-pawn. **34.♕c3?** Finally creating a threat of counterplay, but it is not meant to be.

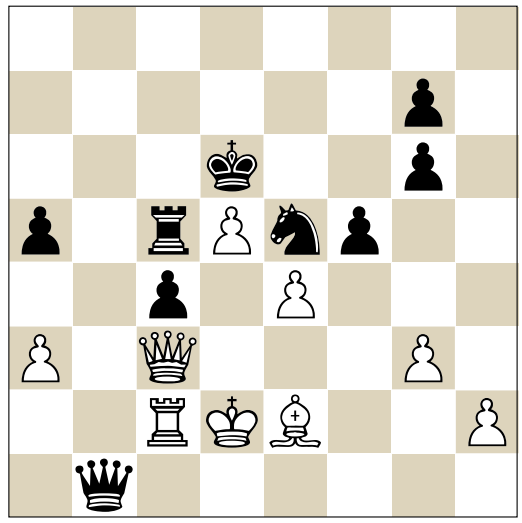


34.♖c1 keeps the game going, but the position is lost: 34...♕b5 and the powerful knight on e5 with the well supported pawn on c4 will eventually decide.

34...♖c5! The e4-pawn will fall and the d5-pawn will fall too.

35.g3 Or 35.♖b2 ♕xe4 36.♖b6+ ♔c7 winning.

35...f5! Breaking up the pawn centre. The rest is elementary.



36.♖b2 ♕xe4 37.♔c1 ♘d3+ White resigned.

One more win scored, things were getting better and better by the day!

14

D76
Magnus Carlsen
Anish Giri
Wijk aan Zee 2011

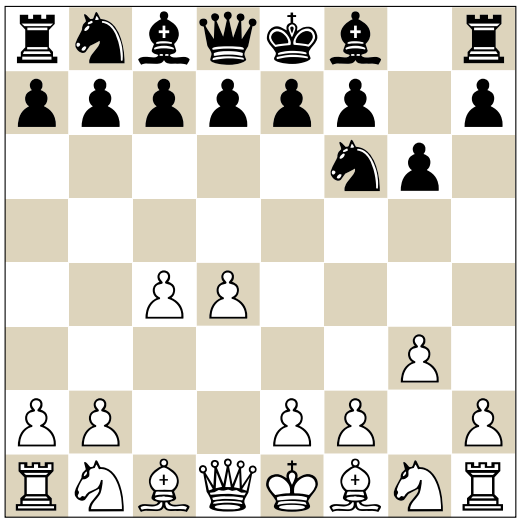
At the drawing of lots of the 2011 Tata Steel tournament I picked number 13. Had my name been Garry (or my Elo 2850) I would have been very happy with this number, but the consequences connected with the (un) lucky number were that not only did I have one more game with black than with white, but also that I got to face most of the top players with

black. One of those games was against Magnus Carlsen, who was holding the first spot in the Elo list at that point. The game was played in Round 3, after two tough fights against my relatively new countrymates Jan Smeets and Erwin l'Ami. I remember that at breakfast before the game, we made a joke that now after the two roughest games I would have an easy tournament ahead of me... After this game I thought that perhaps the joke wasn't a good one... there was just a bit too much truth in it!

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6

Magnus was probably surprised by my opening choice. Before this tournament I hadn't been playing the Grünfeld a lot, and in the first round I used the Slav. Captain Hindsight would say that it was a good choice.

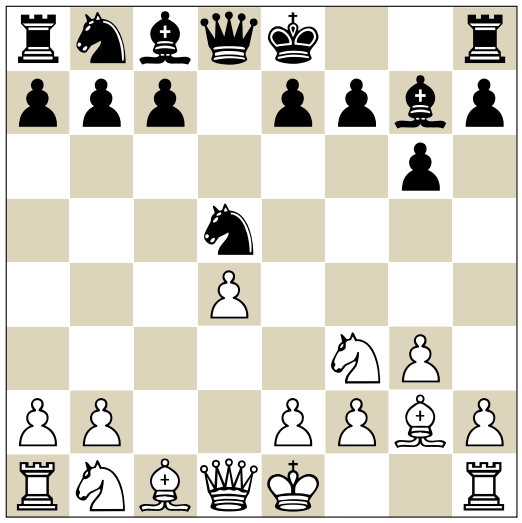
3.g3 The solid choice that we expected. At the beginning of the game Magnus didn't seem to be very comfortable, or so it appeared to me. He was probably not very happy with the opening on the board, nor with the photographers that were all around him. It was, by the way, a unique experience for me... I have never seen so many photographers in two square metres!



3...♗g7 Another way of meeting this solid line is the very solid ...c6, building the pawn block c6-d5, but I thought that it might be too solid...

4.♗g2 d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♘f3

When starting with g3, White has the extra option of e4, followed by the development of the knight to e2. But Magnus decided to transpose to a big main line.

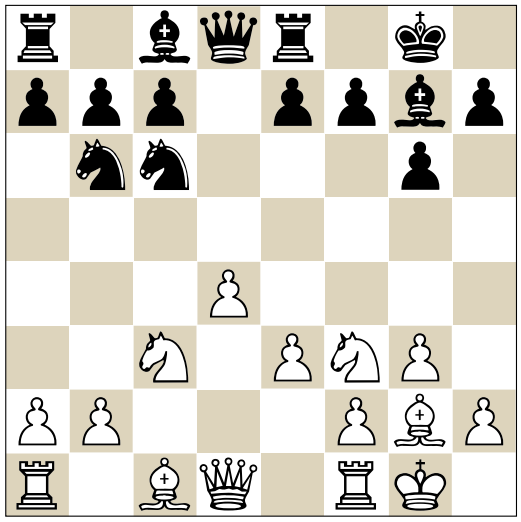


6...♘b6 It seems to be clever to drop the knight back before castling. With this little trick, shown to me by Vachier-Lagrave, I avoid a line in which White plays d5 without e3. Whether it is giving White any advantage is another story, but we chess players are lazy and try to avoid as many things as possible.

7.♘c3 ♘c6 8.e3 8.d5 ♗xc3+ is what I was talking about.

8...0-0 9.0-0 ♖e8

In general, the point of the position here is that Black is supposed to be playing ...e5 one day, and that's how it was played in the early days. Nowadays, however, players on the black side have come to the conclusion that it's better to wait for a better opportunity and hope that they have more useful moves than White.

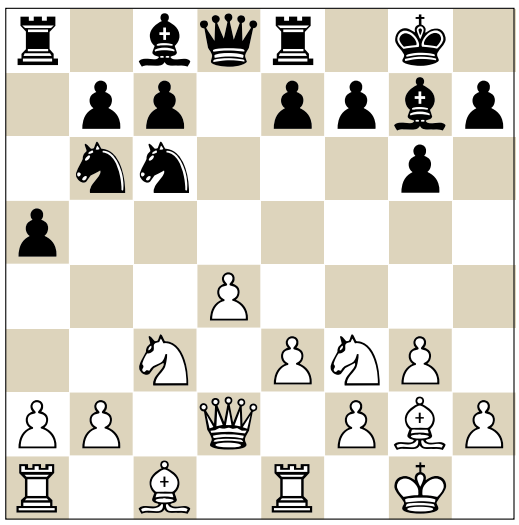


10.♖e1 The same here. Before, White pushed d5 instantly, but nowadays both sides have realized that ...e5 isn't as good as it looks and that there is no need to hurry. However, notice that after ♖e1, d5 is no longer a threat due to ...♗xc3!, attacking the rook.

10...a5!? Nowadays this move is played almost exclusively. As I said, 10...e5 seems to be a bit early and Black has to find a useful waiting move. This move has the purpose of advancing the a-pawn further and then...well, nobody knows what then, but still, we all confidently make this move...

10...♗d7 is another way to wait, but it's not exactly clear what's next.

11.♕d2



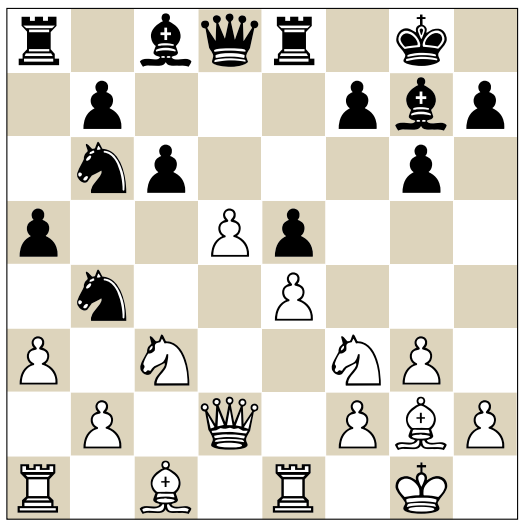
As somebody joked, Magnus was hesitating between two known moves, 11.♕e2 and 11.♕c2, and after some heavy thinking still didn't manage to choose and decided to put the queen in between.

In fact, this move, which was obviously found over the board, isn't as stupid as it looks, although, frankly speaking, it's clear that it can hardly be a good one. Here I tried not to take the move as a personal insult ☺ and just find the most exact reaction. Then, while going through the variations in my head, which is something else than calculating... a lazy version of it, I suddenly noticed a trick... And I love tricks, we all love tricks... So I went for it.

11...e5! The following sequence is more or less forced. I like those sequences... especially when I calculate that at the end I have a good position! 11...a4 is of course also perfectly fine and Black has no problems whatsoever. Here White will probably go 12.♖d1 I suppose this was the idea. Not so stupid either, by the way, as it forced me to take 11.♕d2 seriously! Of course Black is fine here and there is a big choice of possibilities, but I liked my forced way much more.

12.d5 ♘b4 13.e4 c6 14.a3

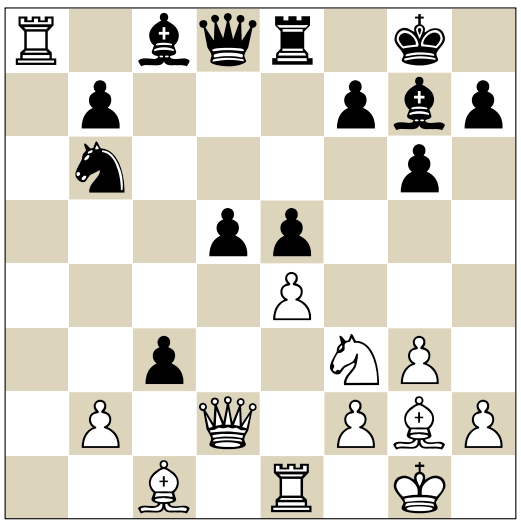
And here comes my point.



14...cxd5! I was extremely happy with this idea when I suddenly found it. Now all White's pieces seem to cooperate... with me! And it's a pleasure when the pieces of your 2800+ opponent are working on your side.

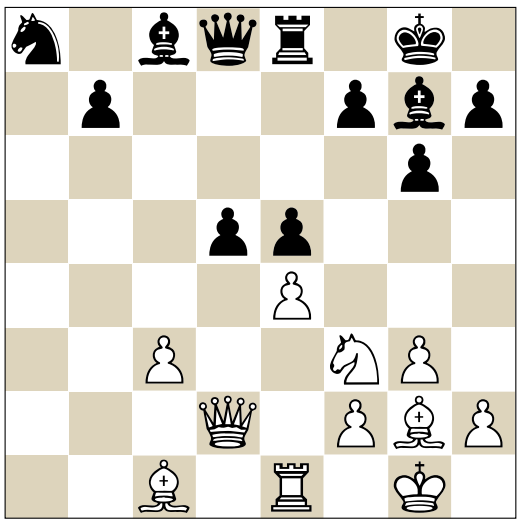
15.axb4 axb4 16.♖xa8 bxc3

To be honest, I was surprised with how fast Magnus went for this line. I even started wondering that maybe I had missed something somewhere. But, in fact, the point was that White had nothing better than this anyway.



17.bxc3 After 17.♖xc8 it's just like dominos: 17...cxd2 18.♖xd8 dxe1♕+. Note that the queen had to be on d2 and the rook on e1! I liked this variation because it's a direct way of showing why exactly ♕d2 isn't a good move.

17...♘xa8

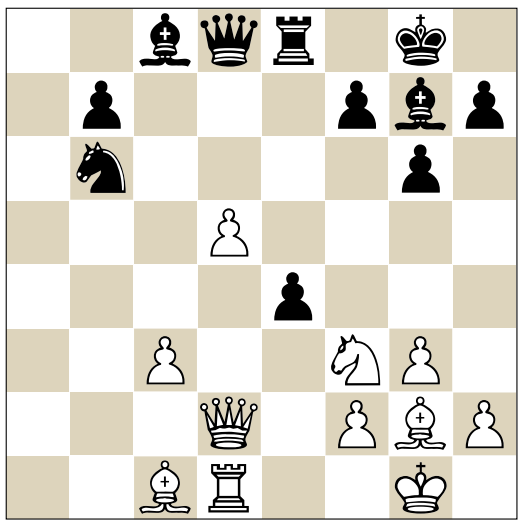


18.exd5? Without thinking. It's an interesting approach. When you desperately want to avoid a draw, you automatically stop considering the drawish lines. That you may end up clearly worse is no longer a problem. 18.♕xd5 is just completely equal: 18...♘b6 and it's hard to imagine something else than a draw out of this position. Or 18...♕xd5 19.exd5 ♘b6 20.♘d2 and here too it should be balanced, though I may even prefer White.

18...♘b6 I was a bit confused, but all my moves were easy, so I just kept on playing quickly. It became already apparent that I was completely out of danger and that Magnus should be thinking about equalizing.

19.♖d1? Magnus kept on surprising me, but fortunately those were pleasant surprises. After this, clearly bad, move White is already in trouble. 19.d6 or 19.c4 would give White good chances to equalize. But then again, I totally don't understand 18.exd5.

19...e4



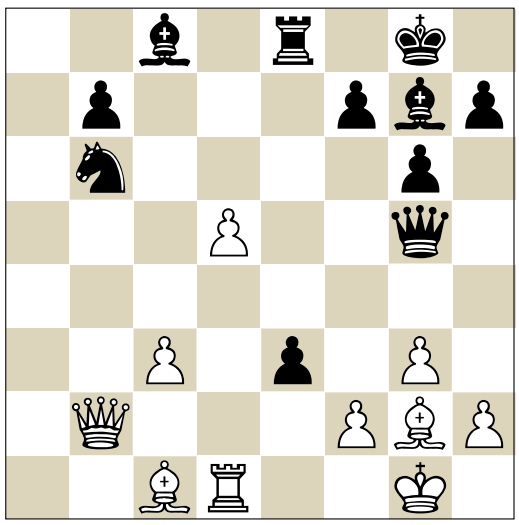
The level of my confusion had already risen to its limit, so I just kept on drinking my chocolate milk, making moves that were making themselves.

20.♘g5? Also played instantly. It

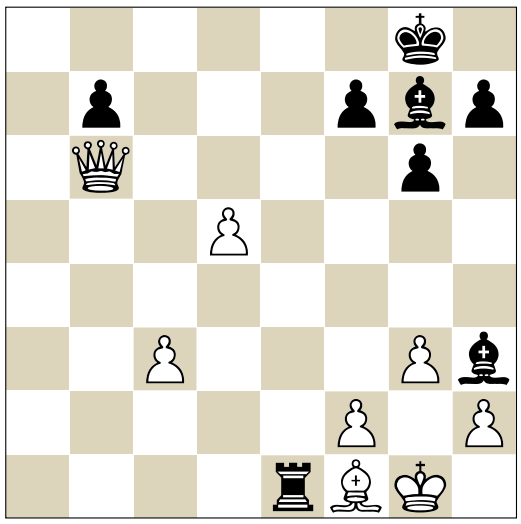
seems as if Magnus was trying to use some psychology, but the moves he was making were just too bad. It's remarkable that such a top player can have such a bad day. Magnus missed the following idea, which under normal circumstances would be apparent to him at one glance. I would even say at half of a glance.

20...e3!

I saw the move instantly, but enjoyed the moment for a few minutes... White is obviously completely lost here. **21.♕b2 ♕xg5!** The position was winning in more than one way, but I liked the following long line with a beautiful finish.



22.♗xe3 22.♕xb6 e2 23.♖e1 ♕xc1! 24.♖xc1 e1♕+ 25.♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 26.♗f1 ♗h3 is a pretty finish!



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

22...♕g4! The last touch. The rook is attacked and after 23.f3 Black can play 23...♘c4 or 23...♘a4. White resigned.

It was a great and unexpected experience. A lot of players, also from the B and C groups, were surprised, and before I escaped from the stage I did shake quite a few hands. I must say that after I left the playing area the amount of hands I had to shake only grew. I was obviously very happy with this game, but also very happy with the fact that I managed to follow it up with a good tournament.

15

D43
Vishy Anand
Anish Giri
Wijk aan Zee 2011

In the 12th and penultimate round of the 2011 Tata Steel Chess Tournament I met the reigning World Champion, Mr. Tata Steel Chess, as he was called at the opening ceremony, Vishy Anand himself.

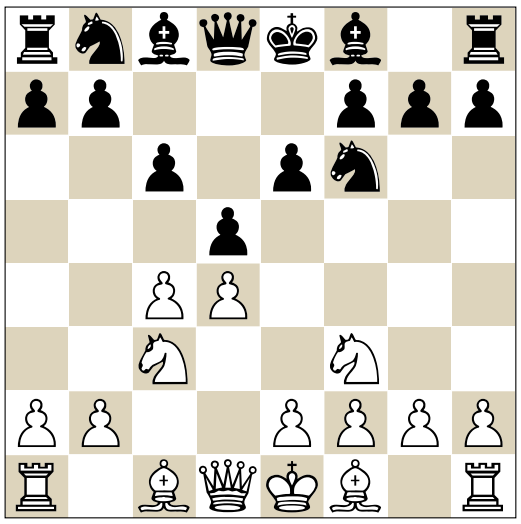
Before this game I was on a comfortable 50 per cent and I was rather happy with my overall result and play. The tournament seemed to be coming to an end, but the thought 'Ah, wait, there's Vishy in Round 12' still kept me very fresh. And so there I was in Wijk aan Zee, opposite yet another 'Big Guy', wait... 'Huge Guy'. And once again with black...

1.d4 d5

Earlier in the tournament I had used the Grünfeld against both Carlsen and Kramnik, and Vishy presumably expected pretty much the same. However, I was well enough prepared to indulge in some flexibility...

2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6

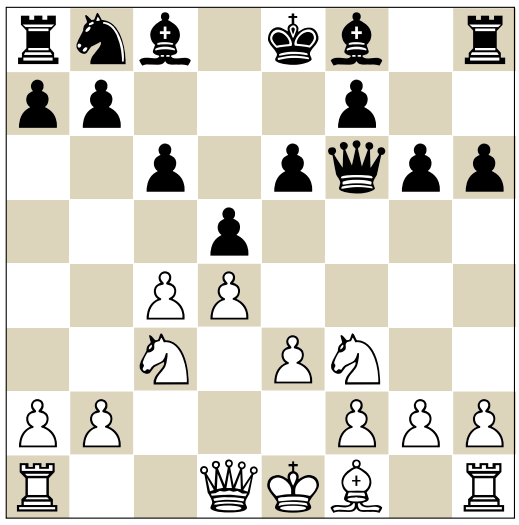
It is pretty remarkable that Anand inspired all us 'little theoreticians' to turn our attention to the Semi-Slav. Remember Mexico 2007, Bonn... And now I was playing it against Vishy himself. But it's cruel, modern chess...



5.♗g5 h6 6.♗xf6

It wasn't a big surprise that Anand decided to play a quieter line, considering that the Moscow Variation wasn't the main thing he had prepared against. However, it had not stopped me from burning half of my morning rehashing the entire Anti-Moscow. I can tell you it's a pleasant thing to do after breakfast, to just sit there and stare at your huge files with a big smile on your face and enjoying the grin of your coach next to you, who knows that it's not he who will have to play all these lines... 6.♗h4 is what I am talking about.

6...♕xf6 7.e3 g6!?

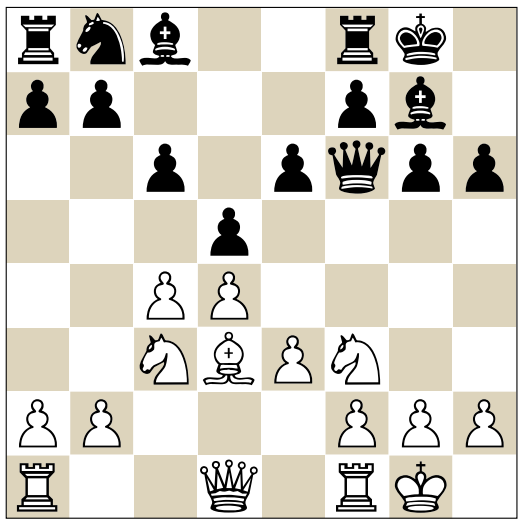


This new line is slowly getting more and more popular. I decided to speed up the process... The main move is clearly 7...♘d7, which sort of keeps the bishop more flexible. One of the big experts, Boris Gelfand, used this flexibility in his last two games in this line and his bishop ended up on d6.

8.♗d3

8.e4!? is one of the paradoxical ways to try and exploit the early move ...g6: 8...dxe4 9.♘xe4 ♗b4+ 10.♔e2 ♕f4 11.♕d3. This was played in a blitz game between Kramnik and Leko. Kramnik eventually won that encounter, but for some reason his approach hasn't found any followers.

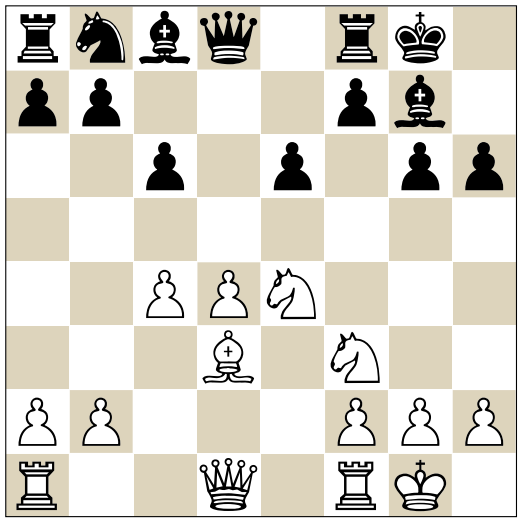
8...♗g7 9.0-0 0-0



10.♖c1!?

With this move White wants to transpose to one of the lines arising from 7... ♘d7. These situations are always a bit two-sided.

On the one hand you admit your failure, on the other hand, if the line is better for White, then why not? 10.e4 is an independent try and the most logical one, but Black has good results after 10...dxe4 11.♘xe4 ♕d8



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and here the absence of the knight on d7 is playing a positive role. The guy on d4 is hanging.

10...dxc4!?

The first novelty. Funny, but I managed to play two reasonable novelties in one game...

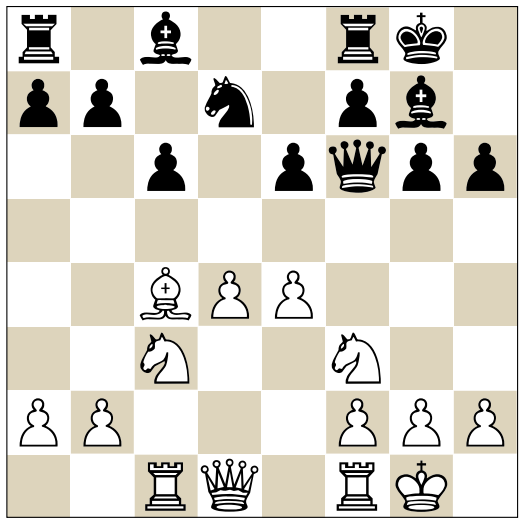
In fact, the main and most logical move, 10...♘d7, is probably quite alright as well, but I wanted to avoid the possibility of 11.cxd5, just in case.

11.♗xc4 ♘d7

Now we are back in a huge main line with hundreds of games. But just for one move...

12.e4

At first when checking this line I also thought it was very promising for White. It all ended when my coach Vladimir Chuchelov asked me one question: 'Why not ...c5?' I failed to answer the question and stored the move with an ! in my file.



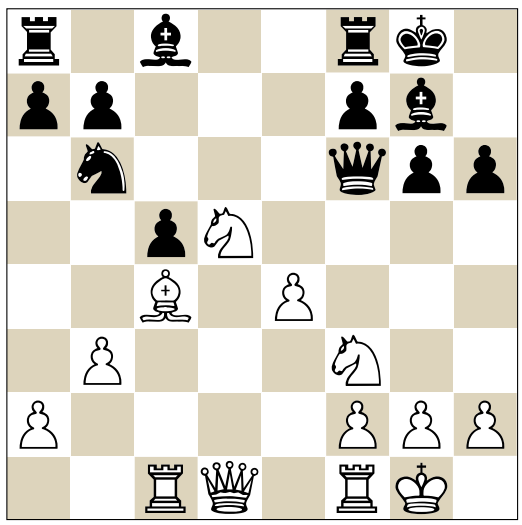
12...c5! 13.d5

13.e5 looks ambitious, but only works against White: 13...♕d8!?, the main point being 14.♖e1 cxd4 15.♕xd4? ♘xe5!.

13...♘b6 14.b3

Vishy reacted very solidly. And I expected that after a few minutes we would both go home with yet another half point. I was a few hours off the mark.

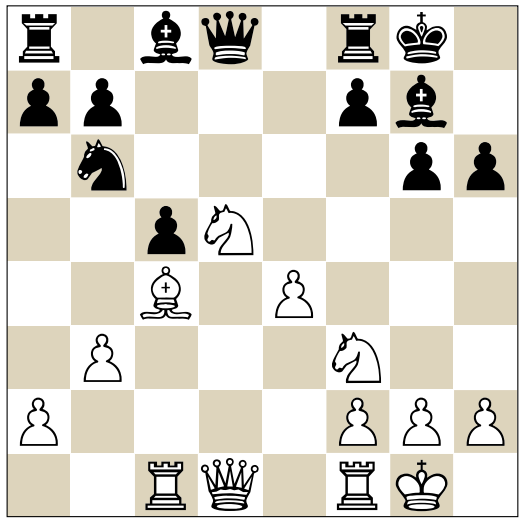
14...exd5 15.♘xd5



15...♕d8

Here I did not have much to do,

so I was trying to remember what exactly was in my analysis... I convinced myself that it said 16.♘xb6 ♕xb6 17.♗d5 ♗e6=, and continued making my usual big walk along the games of the A-group, the B-group, the C-group, and then I'd have a drink and start all over again. The usual ceremony, which happens more often when you are well prepared.



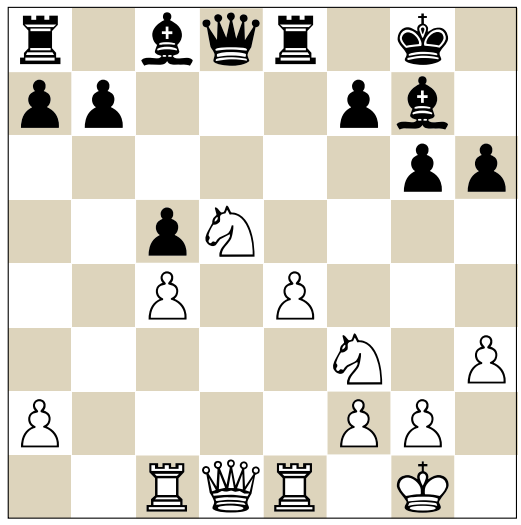
16.h3

This move was the one that was actually in my analysis, and now 16...♗e6 was the move for Black and the line is basically the same. But for some reason I was convinced that 16...♘xc4 was the next move and it had a reason, so I rather quickly and confidently grabbed the bishop.

16...♘xc4!?

16...♗e6 is indeed dead equal: 17.♘xb6 (17.♘f4 bothered me a bit over the board, but in fact after 17...♗xc4 18.bxc4 ♕xd1 19.♖fxd1 there is nothing Black can complain about at all) 17...♕xb6 18.♗xe6 ♕xe6 19.♖xc5 ♕xe4 and it's time to go home happy.

17.bxc4 ♖e8 18.♖e1

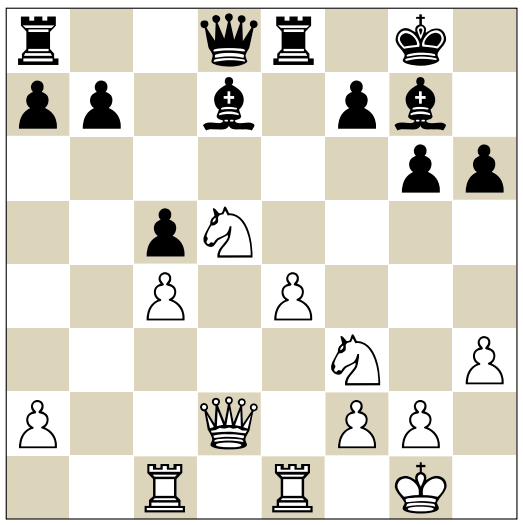


18...♗d7

Somehow I was pretty optimistic about my chances here. My logic was that once I got in ...b5, I would have a strategically better position. 18...♕a5 would stop her majesty from getting to d2, but then I didn't like another trajectory: 19.♕b3 ♖b8 20.♕e3.

19.♕d2

Just after I had made my previous move, I realized that this manoeuvre with the queen could be a bit dangerous, but I quickly found the following sequence and happily continued my walk.

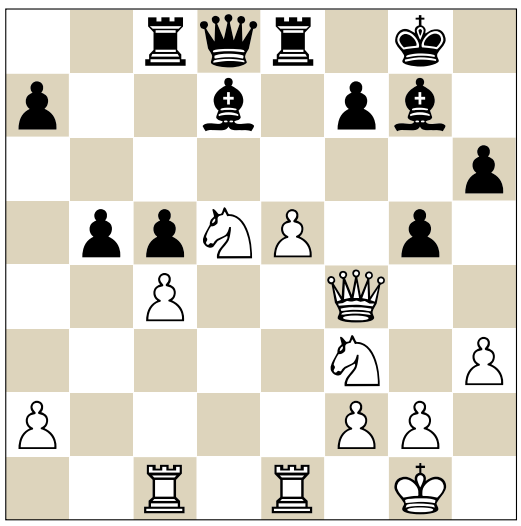


19...♖c8 Preparing ...b5. **20.♕f4** 20.e5 was another possibility, but the position after 20...b5 21.♖cd1

bxc4 22.♕f4 ♖c6! 23.♕xc4 ♕c8 seems totally fine to me. Compared to the game White has his queen on a good square, but the fact that I didn't have to play ...g5 is not to be underestimated.

20...b5 I felt very good, especially because all the moves were playing themselves. At some point I started wondering what if at the end of this sequence it turned out I miscalculated something... But I was in a very confident and optimistic mood that day, so the thought quickly vanished. 20...g5!? is interesting, but somehow I intuitively liked this move more on the next turn. My friend here, who has no intuition, but a lot of RAM, is of a different opinion.

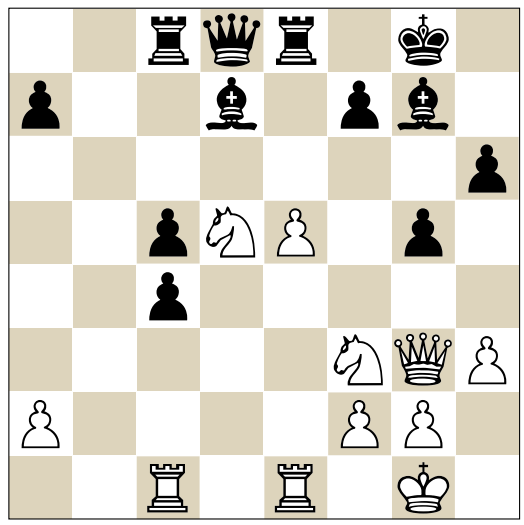
21.e5 g5! If not for this key move that I had counted on, Black would be in trouble. Now I distract White a lot from his plan, though of course ...g5 weakens my king a little.



22.♕g3?!

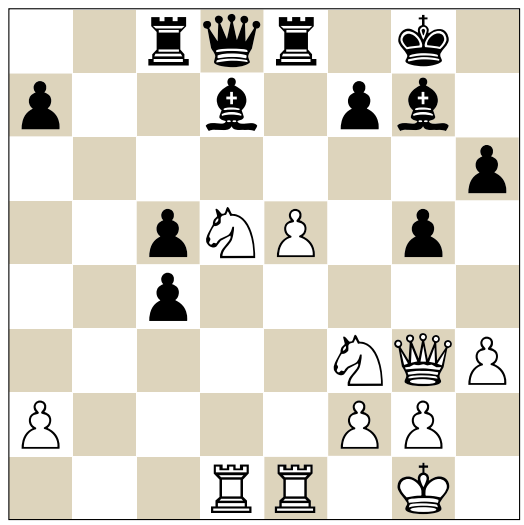
This was the main move I considered over the board and so apparently did Vishy. In fact the queen is a bit out of place here and White's attack starts just too late! After the other two queen moves White would have run much less risk and perhaps I would have lost some of my optimism... But oh well, there was too much of it anyway. 22.♕e4!? was suggested to me after the game, but the other queen move, 22.♕e3, might even be more dangerous.

22...bxc4



23.♖ed1

Somehow I was mainly considering the other rook appearing on this square. In fact both moves are pretty harmless. 23.♖cd1!? may in fact be more dangerous. I can't remember what exactly was my conclusion here, but I do remember I saw a few possibilities:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

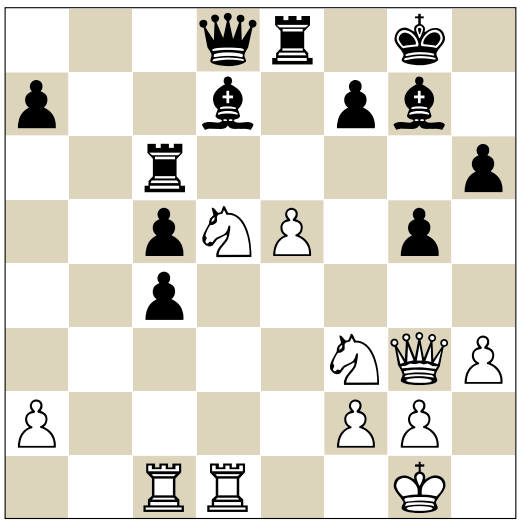
23...♔h8!? is interesting, getting

ready for h4: 24.h4 g4 25.♘h2 ♗a4! 26.♘xg4 ♗xd1 27.♖xd1 and it's equal, though optically one wouldn't say so.

The paradoxical 23...♔f8!? also appealed to me. It feels even more solid than ...♔h8: 24.h4! g4 25.♘h2! ♖c6!? and again it's balanced... But well, with modern equipment it's either mate in 53 or balanced.

23...♖c6, however, is bad due to 24.♘d2 and the e5-pawn is protected compared to the game. Having said that, if you keep on playing strongly you will easily survive even here: 24...c3! 25.♕xc3 c4 and try to beat my engine!

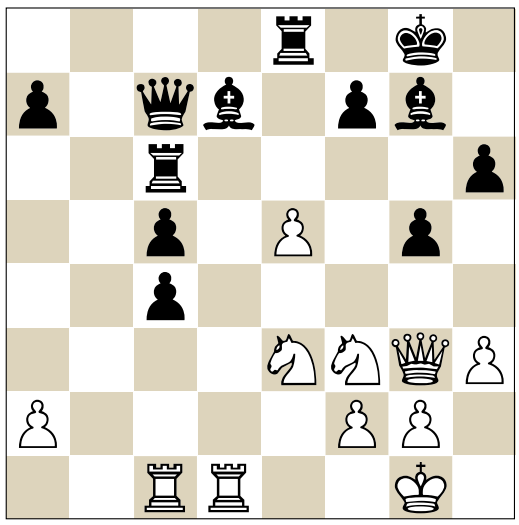
23...♖c6!



24.♘e3 24.♘f6+ won't yield White anything: 24...♗xf6 25.exf6 ♕c7! 26.♘xg5 (26.♖xd7 would be beautiful, but fortunately I had seen it: 26...♕xd7 27.♘xg5 ♕d3 and White will be unable to find either mate or regain his lost exchange) 26...♕xg3 27.fxg3 and here I thought it was a draw after I took the knight, but obviously I have 27...♗f5, giving me maybe even a slight plus.

24.♖xc4 is too primitive and would be met by 24...♕b8.

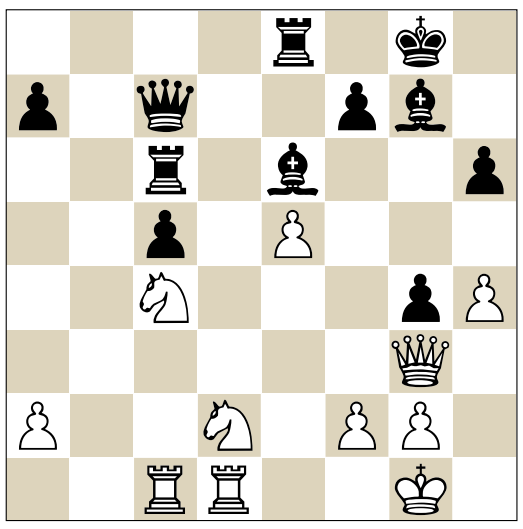
24...♕c7 I didn't really understand what Vishy was planning, so I decided to wait and see. But he didn't show me...



25.♘xc4 25.♘d5!? ♕b8 26.♘e3 was trickier. But Black can also be tricky: 26...♗c8! (26...♗e6 27.h4!) 27.♘xc4 (27.h4 g4!) 27...♗e6! and it looks like the game continuation.

25.h4 was probably best, the point being that after 25...g4! White has 26.♘d5! when things should be balanced.

25...♗e6 Now it was already apparent that I had taken over the initiative. **26.h4** If 26.♖e1 then 26...♖d8!. **26...g4 27.♘fd2**



27...♖d8! Somehow I also seriously considered the crazy and greedy 27...

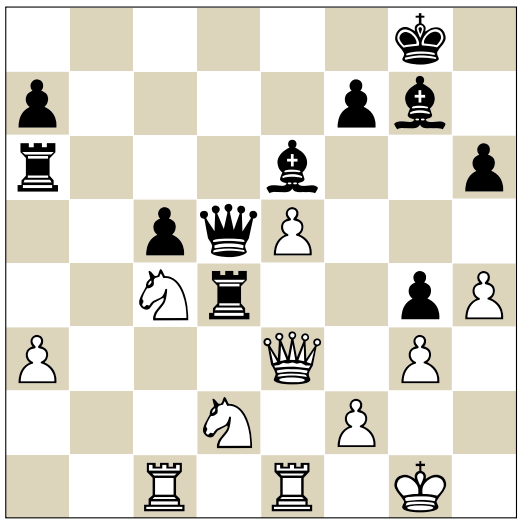
f6. It was just hard to get used to the fact that I was clearly better against the World Champion...

28.♖e1 ♖d4 29.♕e3 ♕d8!

The moves are just playing themselves. It was a pleasure sitting there and being the one who was supposed to execute them.

30.g3 ♕d5

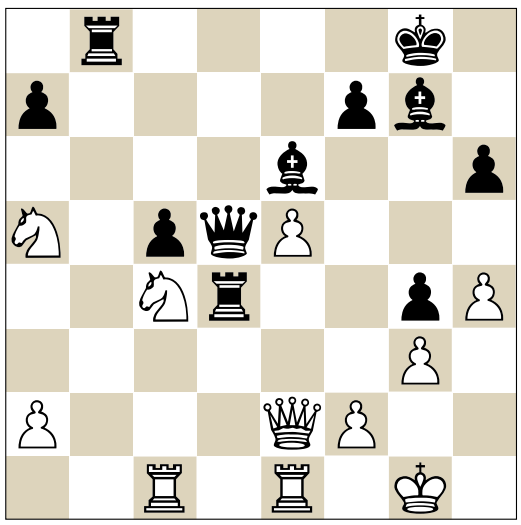
If I had gone 30...♖a6! they would have accused me of cheating: 31.a3 ♕d5 and now the rook gets to a4, exactly what I had planned, but the ♘a5 idea has been stopped. White is really in trouble here.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

31.♘a5! An extremely strong defensive resource, which I had underestimated.

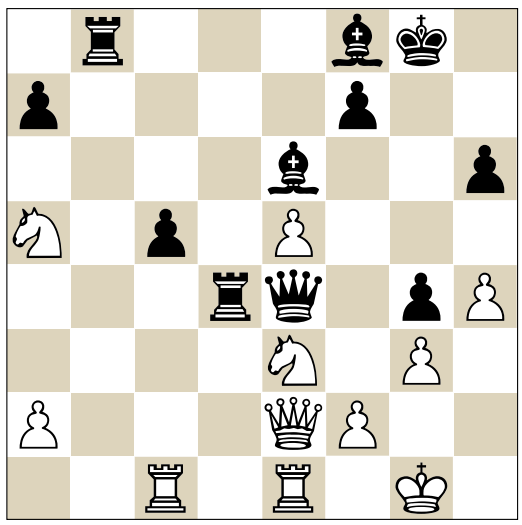
31...♖c8 32.♘dc4 ♖b8 33.♕e2



33...♗f8!

Somehow I couldn't believe that White would suddenly equalize in such a position. This disbelief inspired me to find this only move to keep an edge.

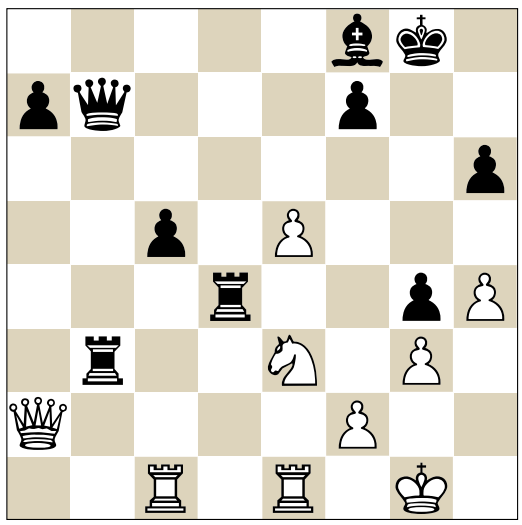
34.♘e3 ♕e4



35.♘b3!

An interesting defensive idea. I wasn't too upset, though, because now I had at least an extra pawn. And in Wijk aan Zee it isn't everyday that you get free extras...

35...♗xb3 36.axb3 ♖xb3 37.♕a2 ♕b7



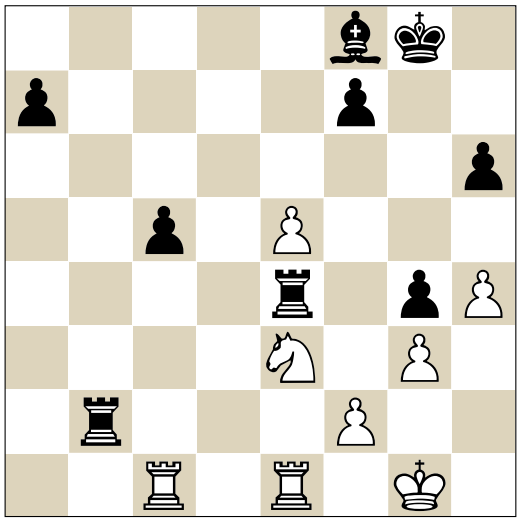
38.♕c2

The surprising 38.e6!? fxe6 39.♕c2! was an interesting and unnoticed possibility. White has surprisingly

good drawing chances here.

38...♖b2 39.♕f5 ♕e4 40.♕xe4 ♖xe4

Before the time-control I overestimated my position and somehow thought that I was quite close to winning. I can't explain why, but this endgame seems to be very close to a draw.

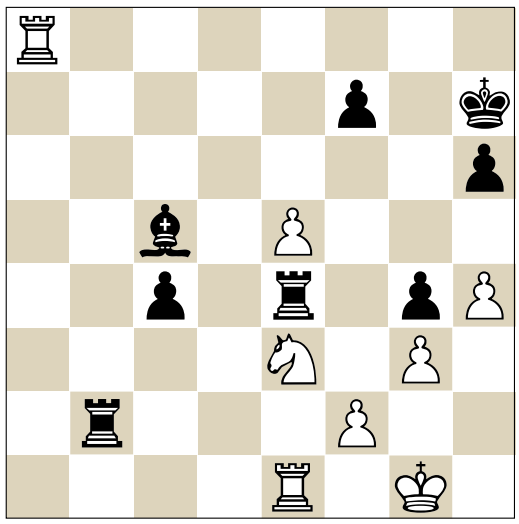


41.♖a1?

Anand called this a blunder. And indeed it was, but during the game I thought it was a reasonable move. Correct was 41.♖ed1! ♖b8! to prevent the white rook from entering the house: 42.♘d5! and White seems to be escaping, due to a lot of tactical nuances in the position and a nasty knight.

41...c4! To be honest, while thinking for some 30 minutes here, I came to the conclusion that the position was most likely a draw. This move seemed the best practical try to me. Apparently, it's also the strongest one. 41...♗g7 also entered my mind, as I was trying to find some genius move. After I realized that the move mainly looked like a genius move, I went for ...c4.

42.♖xa7 ♗c5 43.♖a8+ ♔h7

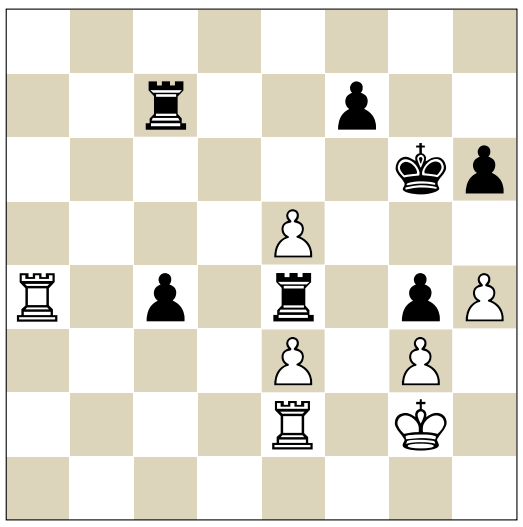


44.♖f1!

This was the reason why I hesitated before playing ...c4. I didn't see how to proceed, but when I reached this position I regained my optimism.

44.♖a4 was another option and it seems to be stronger in fact! As far as I remember, I intended to play 44...♗xe3 45.fxe3 and now not 45...♖b7! but 45...♔g7 and here I missed 46.♖a7!.

After 45...♖b7! 46.♔g2 Black keeps good chances, but so does White, as after 46...♔g6 47.♖e2 ♖c7



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the e-pawn will be lost, but the game will not be over. And if so, it would most likely be a draw.

44...c3

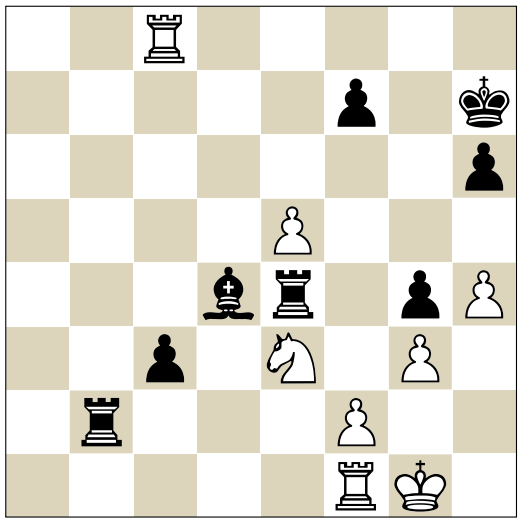
44...♔g7!? was my initial idea. It wasn't bad, but it seems that the game move is winning. After 45.♘f5+ (45.♖c8! is the tough move I missed: 45...♗xe3 46.fxe3 ♖xe3 47.♖xc4 ♖xg3+ 48.♔h1 and strangely enough it's most likely to end in a draw) 45...♔g6 46.♘e3 I wasn't sure whether my king's position had actually improved.

44...♗xe3 45.fxe3 ♖b7 wasn't considered. Somehow it wasn't the day to consider putting my rook in reverse; it just wasn't that day...

45.♖c8

45.♘d5 ♗xf2+! is the key trick here: 46.♖xf2 ♖e1+ 47.♔g2 ♖xf2+ 48.♔xf2 c2 winning.

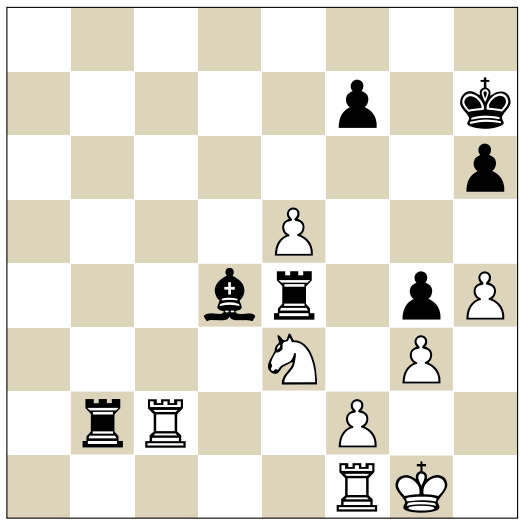
45...♗d4



46.♖c7

46.♖c4!? was the move I had expected. I got extremely excited about the extraordinary idea 46...c2!? and I just assumed that there was a win after 47.♖c7!! but surprisingly enough, there wasn't.

47.♖xc2



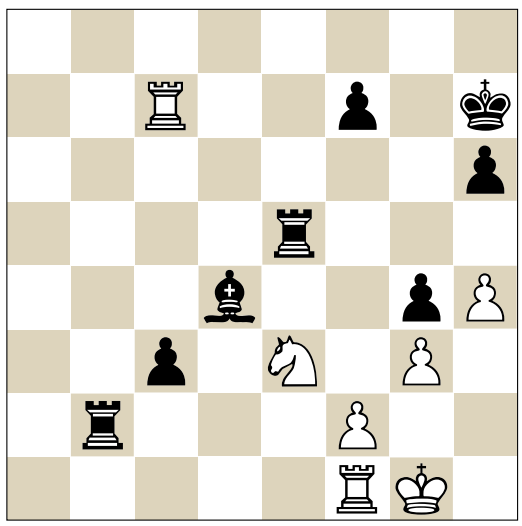
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

47...♖xe3!! 48.♖xb2 (48.fxe3 ♗xe3+) 48...♖xg3+! 49.♔h2 ♖h3+! is the beautiful point.

However, after 46.♖c4 the best continuation is most likely 46...h5!. But White has some chances: 47.♔h1! ♖d2 48.♘d5 ♖xe5 49.♘xc3 ♖xf2 50.♖xf2 ♗xf2 51.♔g2 ♗e1 and it's not clear to me how it's going to end, but I would bet I was not going to lose.

46...♖xe5

To be honest, at this point I was thinking that White should have a draw in the resulting rook ending. Ah, if only somebody had told me I was wrong...



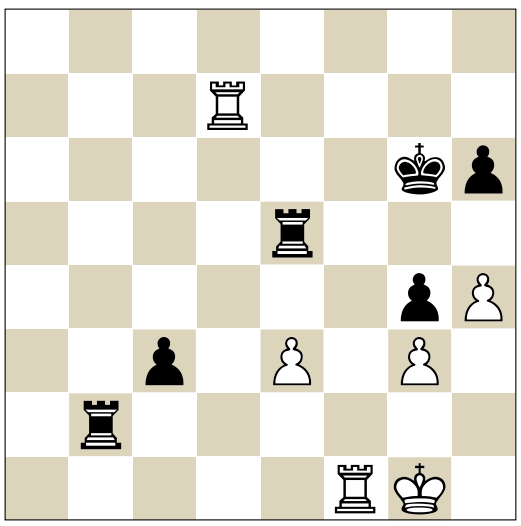
47.♖xf7+

This was played instantly and is also obvious. But objectively it seems to be losing. 47.♘xg4! was suggested as a saving resource, which could very much be the case, but it's hard to say (47...♖ee2 48.h5! is a pretty point, White is likely to hold after 48...♔g7 49.♔g2 ♖bd2 50.♔f3 c2 51.♘e3 ♔f6 52.♖c8). After 47...♖f5 the following sequence is forced: 48.♖c4 ♖d2 49.♖c1! ♗g7 (49...h5 50.♘e3!) 50.f4 (50.♖f1 h5 51.♘e3) 50...♗d4+ 51.♖xd4 ♖xd4 52.♖xc3 ♖d2 53.♘e5 ♖f6 54.♖f3 and White has to exchange one rook. The resulting endgame is not so clear to me. White has good saving chances after transferring the knight to e3. Although I may be missing a win.

47...♔g6 48.♖d7!

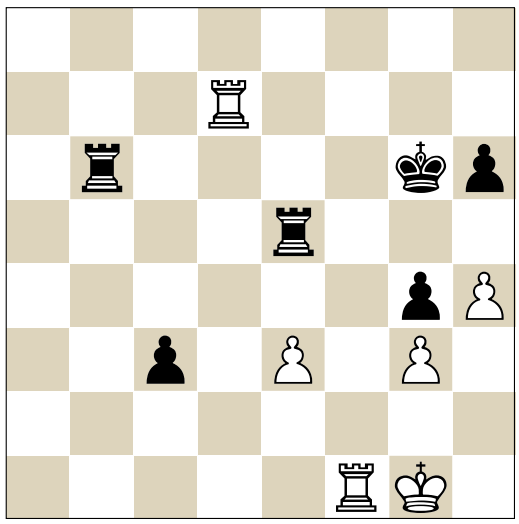
48.♖f4 was what I was calculating as the only move and it seemed drawn to me, but from a distance I missed an easy trick: 48...♗xe3 49.fxe3 ♖c5! 50.♖xg4+ ♔h5! winning.

48...♗xe3 49.fxe3



49...♖d2??

This move was born not because I thought it was winning or anything, but just due to the fact that somehow it seemed to me that the game was already over and it was just a draw. At this point I had little time and Anand's good defending kind of hypnotized me. The winning move is easy to explain even to an amateur and I would probably have found it instantly, simply using the elimination method. But first of all there was nobody screaming from the playing hall that I had a win (next time I should hire someone for that...). Against Grischuk I also spoiled a win for the same reason. And secondly, the way the mind works after some six hours of play is pretty different. 49...♖b6! would most probably win. There is a fortress that computers don't understand and which was pointed out by Vishy instantly after the game. If White has a rook on f2 and on c1 and Black has a pawn on c2 and both rooks on the c-file and his king is cut off on the f-file, White draws. However, it seems impossible for White to achieve this. Here are some key lines:



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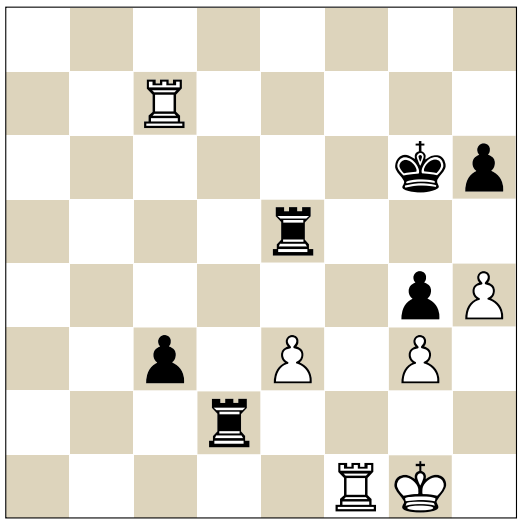
50.e4 ♖xe4 51.♖c7 (51.♖d5 ♖f6!) 51...♖e3 52.♖f4!? h5! (52...♖xg3+ 53.♔f2 ♖d3 54.♖xg4+ ♔h5 55.♖gc4

seems to be drawn) 53.♔f2 ♖d3 54.♖c5 ♖b2+ 55.♔g1 ♖d1+! (55...♖xg3+ 56.♔f1 ♖b6 57.♖g5+ ♔h6 58.♖f8 isn't so clear) 56.♖f1 ♖xf1+ 57.♔xf1 c2 58.♔e1 ♖b1+ 59.♔d2 ♖g1 60.♖xc2 ♖xg3 61.♖c6+ ♔f5 62.♖c5+ ♔f4 63.♖xh5 ♖a3 and Black wins. In fact, none of these lines is very difficult. I probably just had to find 49..♖b6!... But then again, I didn't

50.♔g2 50...♖xe3 51.♖f2 ♖c6 52.♖d1 h5 (52...c2?? 53.♖c1 ♖ec3) 53.♖df1 (53.♖c1 ♖f6) 53...♖d6. White always manages to exchange a rook here or grab the f-file.

50.♖c7



Draw. I can't tell you how it feels when you beat a World Champion, but I can tell you that when you press him the whole game it doesn't feel too bad either. After 50...c2 51.♖c6+ ♔h5 I thought it was a draw anyway, but after I realized that I had missed 52.♖ff6 I decided to offer a draw before it was too late ☺.

Funnily, this position is drawn due to the rambling rook!: 52...♖d1+ 53.♔f2 ♖d2+ 54.♔e1 c1 ♖xc1 54...♖xe3+ 55.♔xd2 ♖d3+.

50.♖xd2 is also drawing, by the way: 50...cxd2 51.♖d1 ♖xe3 52.♖xd2! ♖xg3+ 53.♔f2 ♖f3+ 54.♔g2, and there seems to be no way to win.

16

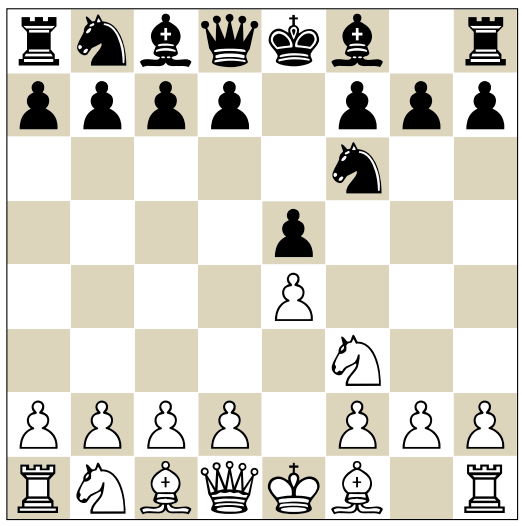
C42
Fabiano Caruana
Anish Giri
Reggio Emilia 2011/12

The Reggio Emilia New Year's tournament traditionally takes place 'during' two years. The 2011/12 edition was a very lucky victory for me, but at this point, at the start of Round 5, I was on –2 and didn't yet have any ambitions...

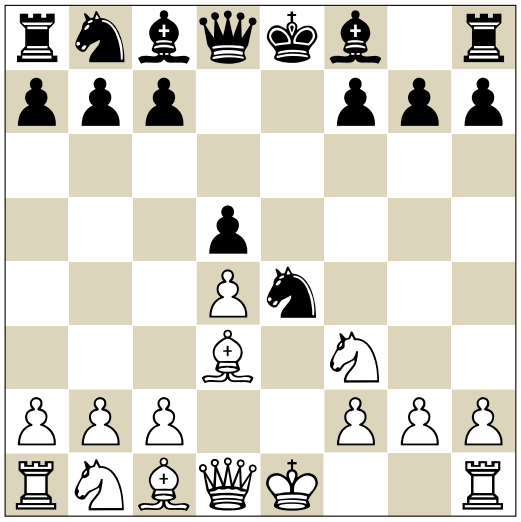
By the way, note the date the game was played on: 31.12.2011! It's party-time!

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6

The Petroff Defence, although reputedly dull and boring, has brought me many important victories. In fact, later in this same tournament I managed to beat Nakamura with it as well.



3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘xe4 5.d4 d5 6.♗d3

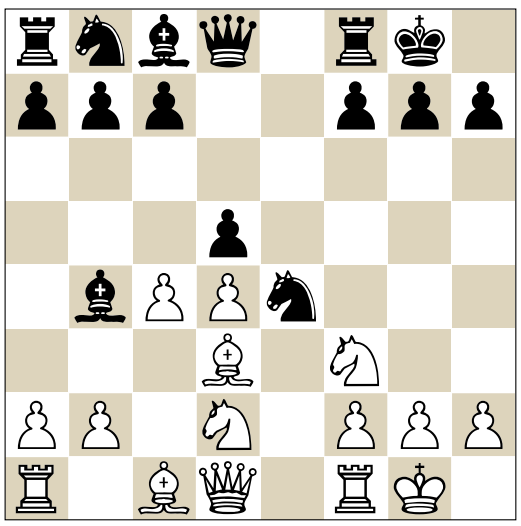


6...♗e7!?

For some reason 6...♘c6 7.♘c3!? became trendy before this game. Instead of studying that, I found that this move order is simply avoiding it altogether.

7.c4!? The only way to exploit my move order, as after 7.0-0, I would go 7...♘c6, ready to meet 8.c4 with 8...♘b4. However, now there comes a check.

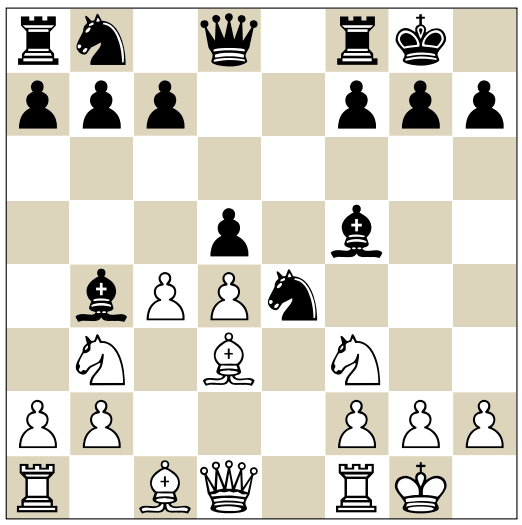
7...♗b4+! 8.♘bd2 0-0 9.0-0



9...♗f5 Here my analysis was saying: 10.a3, take everything on d2 and on d3, and equality. Fabiano, however, wanted to spend the last day of the year in a full fight.

10.♘b3!?

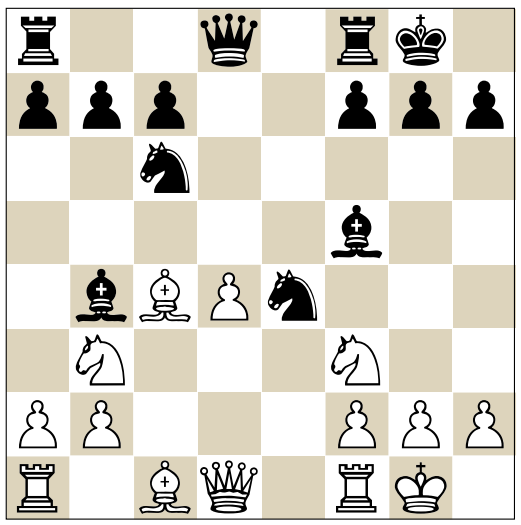
There are few chess players who would play this move on the 31st of December. I was no doubt expecting 10.a3 when after the exchanges I would have enough time to get ready for New Year's Eve. But with 10.♘b3 Fabiano disrupted my plans.



He was not interested in 10.a3 ♗xd2 11.♗xd2 ♘xd2 12.♕xd2 ♗xd3 13.♕xd3 dxc4 14.♕xc4 ♘d7 and getting ready for the Happy New Year festivities.

10...dxc4 11.♗xc4 ♘c6

For a while I was confused, but soon I found a nice set-up. My knight goes to c6, the bishops drop back to d6 and g6 and the initiative on the kingside can start with ...f5!?. Now the same but with moves:

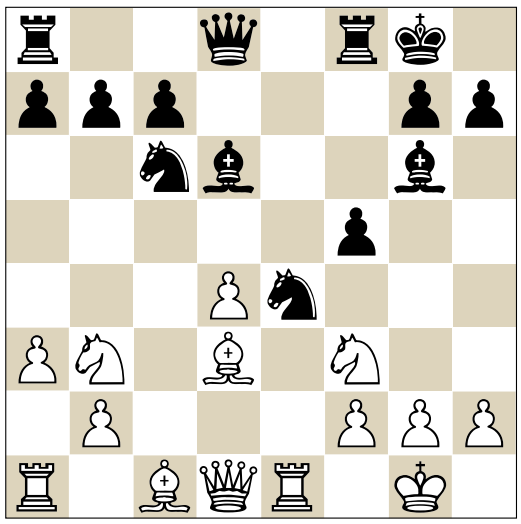


12.♗d3 ♗g6 13.a3

13.♕c2 seemed more solid to me, when I was planning to simplify with 13...♘f6.
However, it is also possible to keep it complex: 13...♖e8!? 14.a3 ♗f8 when Black is comfortable.

13...♗d6 14.♖e1 f5!?

I could have played it safer (♘f6), but I didn't see any reason to shy away from this ambitious thrust.

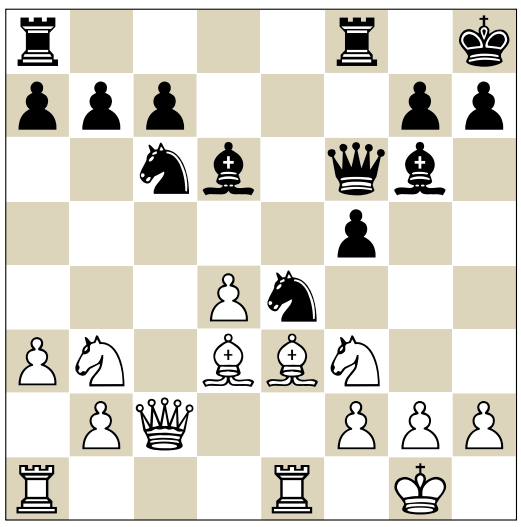


15.♕c2 Stepping out of the potential pin with ...♗h5.

15...♔h8 15...♕f6 was good too.

16.♗e3 ♕f6!

The idea of mobilizing with ...♕f6 and ...♖ae8 appealed to me.



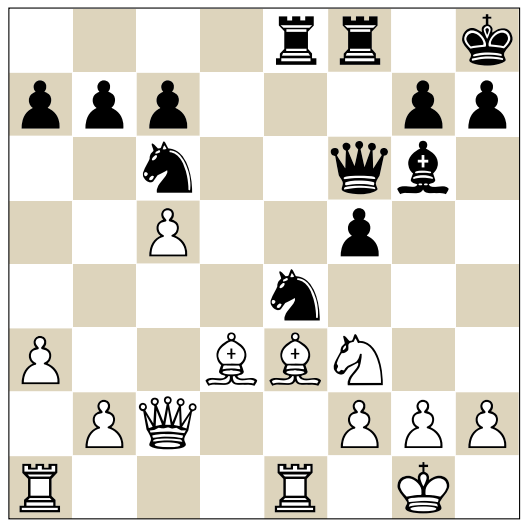
16...♗h5 is premature: 17.♗xe4 fxe4 18.♘g5!.

16...♗f7 was my initial idea, but I realized it wasn't as clever as it seemed: 17.♘c5!.

17.♘c5?!

This makes Black's life easy. Having said that, it was the only move that my opponent and I considered here. Instead, 17.d5! was quite strong, the point being that after 17...♘e5 18.♘xe5 ♕xe5 19.f4! the d5-pawn is surprisingly taboo: 19...♕xd5 20.♗c4! ♕c6 21.♘a5! ♕e8 22.♘xb7 with a clear advantage for White. However, after 19...♕f6! the position would remain balanced.

17...♗xc5 18.dxc5 ♖ae8!

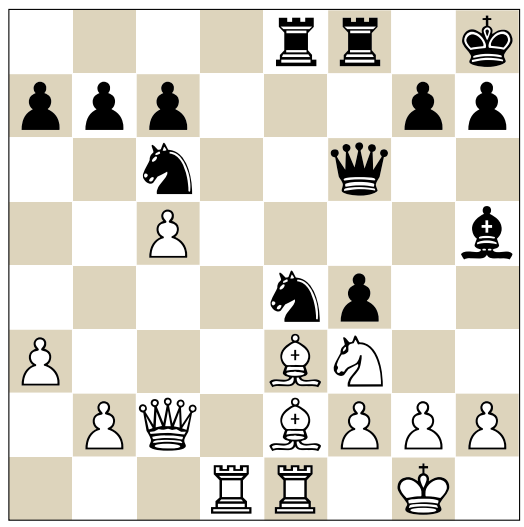


19.♖ad1 Interesting was 19.♘d2!? when White maintains the balance.

19...♗h5

Creating an unpleasant pin.

20.♗e2 f4



21.♗c1?!

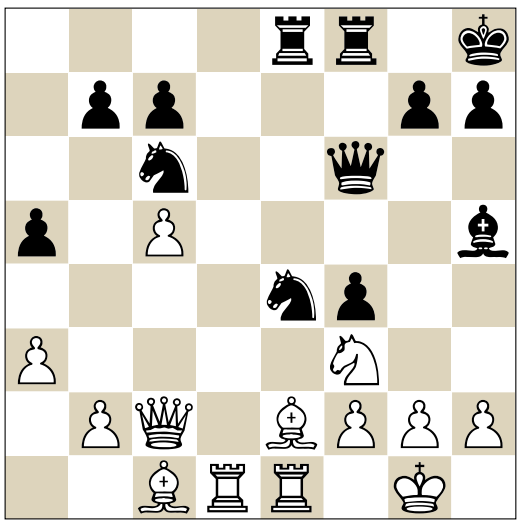
To be honest, while I liked my position, I didn't think I had any real advantage. I was trying to find something after the forcing ...♗xf3 and ...♘g5, but came to the conclusion that they will lead nowhere. Eventually I realized it's wise to make a waiting move and only after one more think I found the right way.

Stronger than the text-move was 21.♗d4!. The bishop in the centre seems quite loose, but in fact the position remains alright for White. There is nothing Black can really gain: 21...♘xd4 22.♘xd4 ♗g6 23.♗f3 ♘g5 24.♕c3! with equality.

21...a5!

This move took a lot of effort, but eventually it gave me a feeling of full satisfaction.

I realized that doubling rooks, starting with 21...♖e7, wouldn't work due to 22.b4! and then it hit me, I just have to prevent that!



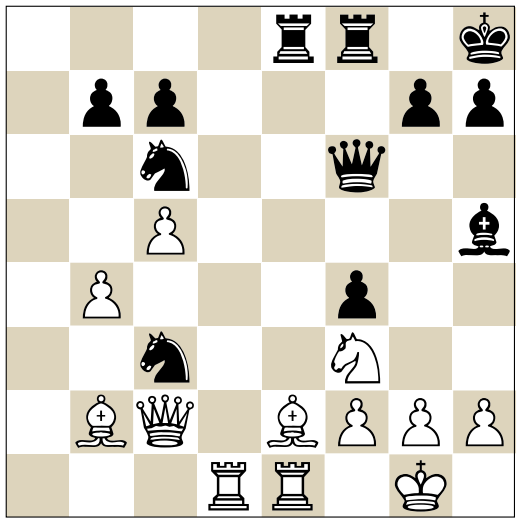
22.♕c4?!

This move is quite pointless, but White no longer had an easy life.

22.b3 ♕c3! wins at least a pawn.

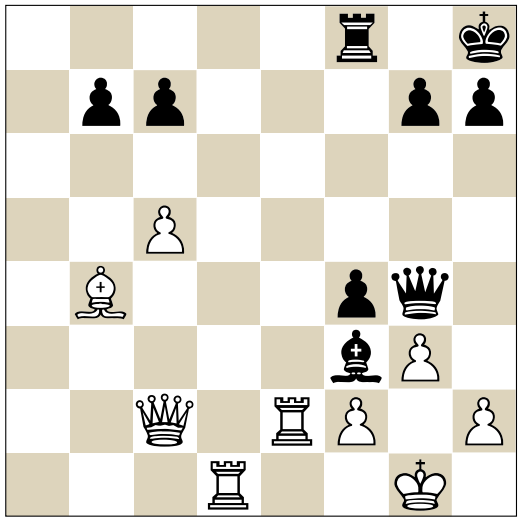
22.h3!? is a clever waiting move, to which I would reply 22...h6!? and White once again faces the same problems (22...♖e7 allows 23.b3! and the rook on e7 is vulnerable in the variation with 23...♕c3? (after 23...♖fe8! 24.♗b2 ♕g6 25.♘h4 ♕g5 26.♗xh5 ♕xh5 27.♘f3 ♕xc5 28.♕xc5 ♘xc5 29.♖xe7 ♖xe7 30.b4 ♘a4 31.♗a1 h6 Black is slightly better) 24.♗d3.

22.b4!? was quite an interesting practical attempt: 22...♘c3! (22...♕c3?! 23.♕b1 axb4 24.axb4 ♕xb4 25.♕xb4 ♘xb4 26.♗f1 gives White compensation for the sacrificed pawn, thanks to his bishop pair) 23.♗b2 axb4 24.axb4 and now it's time for some tricks:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

24...♗xf3! 25.♗xc3 (25.♗xf3? ♘xd1! winning) 25...♖xe2! 26.♖xe2 ♕g5 27.g3 and now it's time to show some talent: 27...♘xb4!! (distracting the bishop; 27...♕g4? 28.♖de1 ♕h3? loses to the clever 29.♗xg7+! ♔xg7 30.♕c3+, picking up the bishop on f3) 28.♗xb4 ♕g4! and now the threat of ...♕h3 is deadly and after something like



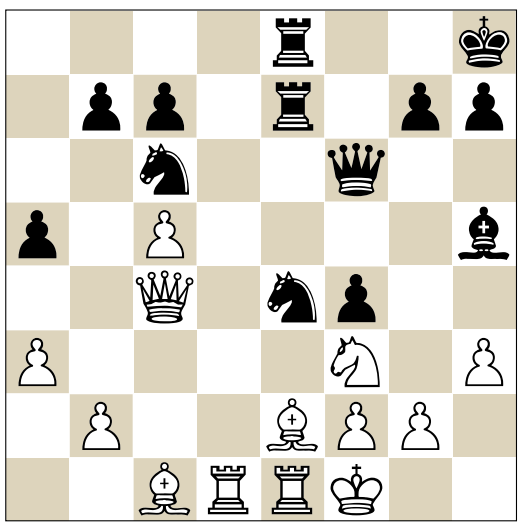
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

29.♗c3 Black wins back the rook and keeps the extra pawn and a better position: 29...♗xe2 30.♖d4.

22...♖e7 Black has a free hand now, so I decided to simply double.

23.h3? 23.♔f1 was the only way to put up some resistance: 23...♖fe8 24.♗d3! ♗f7 (24...♘e5!?) 25.♕c2 a4!? and Black keeps the initiative, but it's far from over.

23...♖fe8 24.♔f1?



24.♖f1 was the lesser evil, but White is close to lost after 24...h6!?.

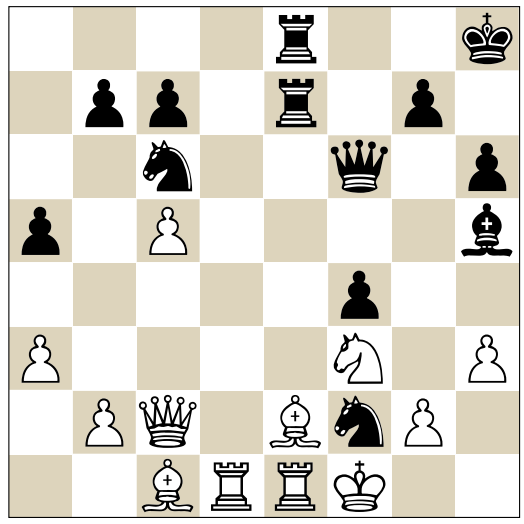
24...h6

Overwhelmed by my full domination I decided to take my time on the board and win some time on the clock. But then I suddenly noticed that I missed a very beautiful shot, 24...♘xf2!. Fortunately, I realized White is just not able to prevent it!

25.♕c2

There was no defence anyway, but this makes things quite simple.

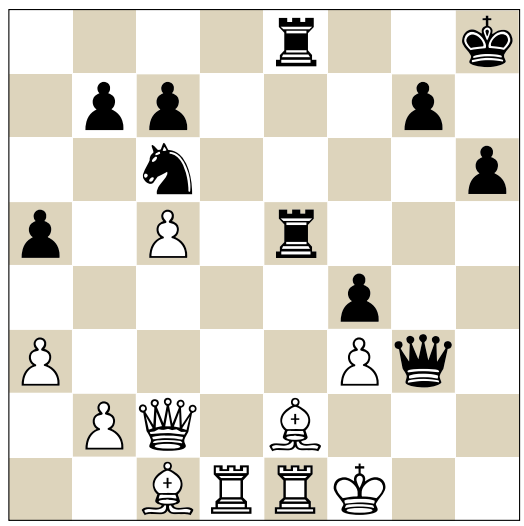
25...♘xf2! It was about time.



26.♔xf2 ♗xf3 27.gxf3 ♕h4+ 28.♔f1 ♕xh3+ 29.♔f2 ♕g3+ 30.♔f1

Now Black needs to get just one more piece closer to White's king.

30...♖e5 It's all over.



31.♗xf4 ♕xf4 32.♕c4 ♖e4 33.♕b5 ♕g3 White resigned. A very clean and straightforward victory which at the very least made sure I was in a good mood for the New Year's celebrations!

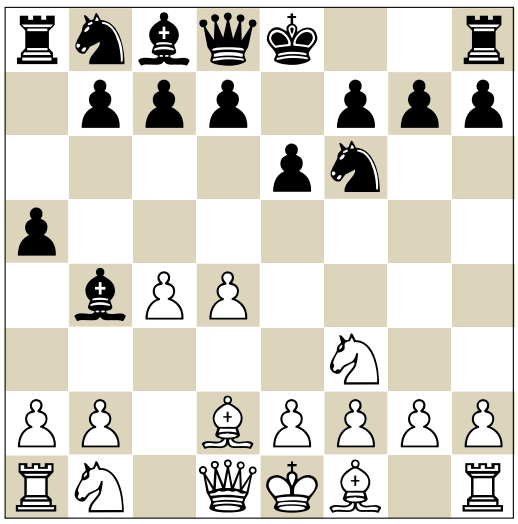
17

E11
Anish Giri
Vassily Ivanchuk
Reggio Emilia 2011/12

This was the first game played in 2012. In Round 6 of the tournament in Reggio Emilia. I had just started to fight back from –2 by beating Caruana. Before this game I still felt a bit shaky, but quite quickly the developments took a very pleasant course for me.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♗b4+ 4.♗d2 a5

It's a mystery how Ivanchuk is choosing his openings. Sometimes he guesses very right, sometimes very wrong.

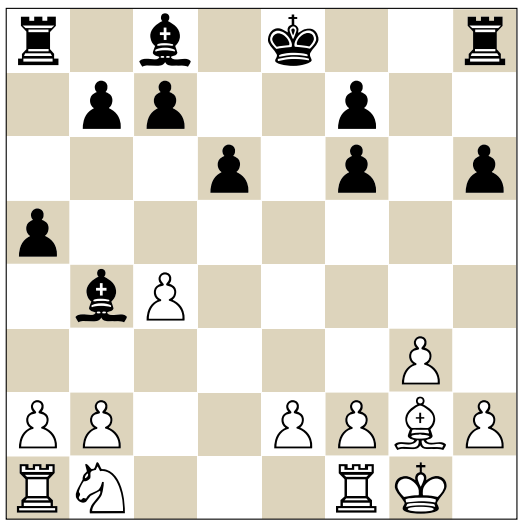


5.g3 d6 6.♗g2 ♘c6 7.0-0 e5 8.♗g5

I don't think I knew the theory of this line, but this appeared quite obvious.

8...exd4 9.♘xd4 ♘xd4 10.♕xd4 h6 11.♗xf6 ♕xf6 12.♕xf6 gxf6

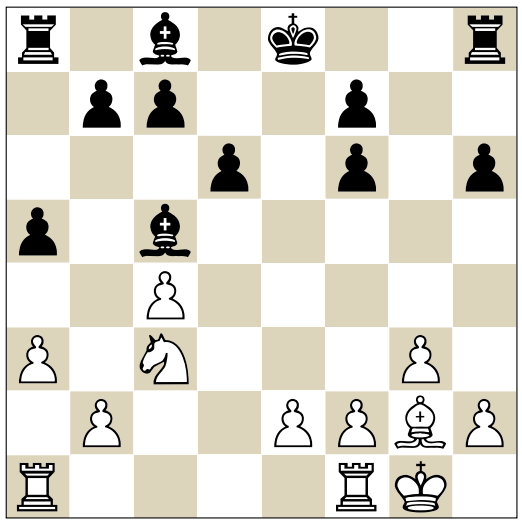
I didn't know how to asses this ending, but at least I knew I wasn't worse...



13.a3

Such decisions weren't easy for me. One can also try to avoid weakening the queenside with 13.♖c1.

13...♗c5 14.♘c3



14...c6

Black also has his choices. 14...a4!? comes to mind, fixing the pawn structure. Although in that case he has to reckon with White's knight appearing on d5.

15.e3 ♔e7

Once again, 15...a4 was an option.

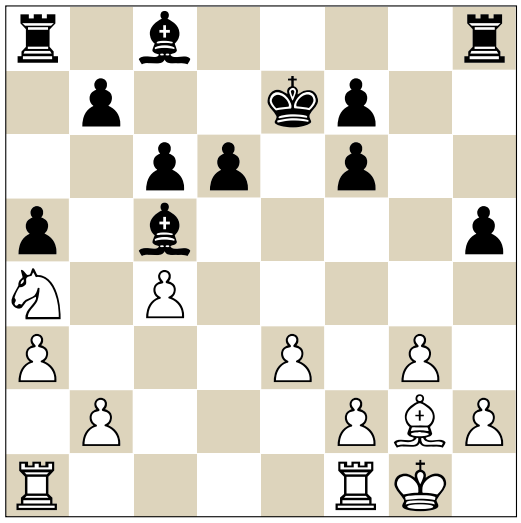
16.♘a4

I wasn't sure whether ...a4 from Black was good or bad, but by now I thought it was time to prevent it.

16...h5??

An inexplicable mistake from such

a great player. My opponent clearly didn't like the course of the game, but this impulsive move is just creating a weakness.



17.h4!

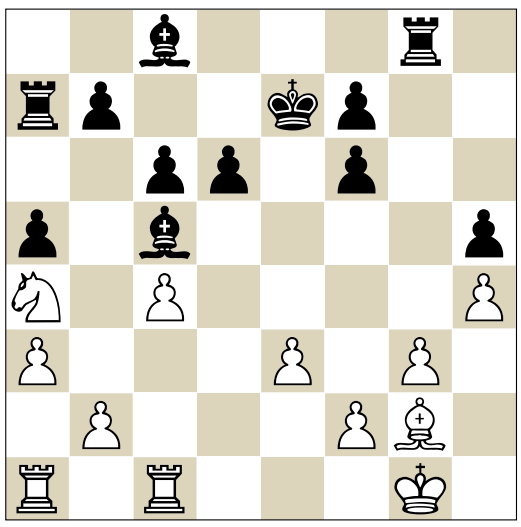
Of course.

17...♖g8

The rook should probably have remained on h8, protecting the weak h5-pawn. But that day the great Ivanchuk was playing quickly and poorly.

18.♖fc1 ♖a7

Black is doomed to a passive defence.

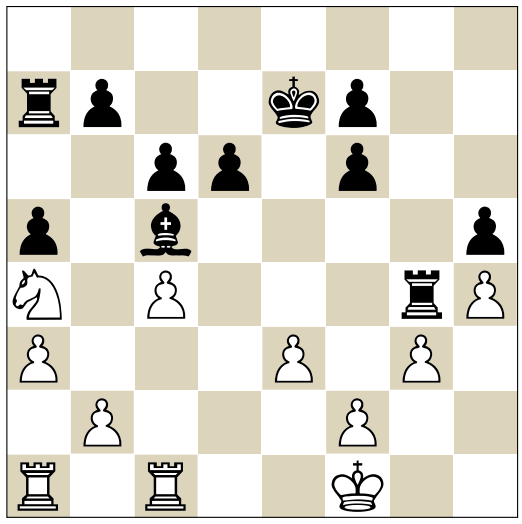


19.♗f3 ♗g4

Giving up his only asset: the two bishops. But with the pawn being on h5 and having played ...♖hg8, there hardly was any choice.

20.♗xg4 ♖xg4 21.♔f1

Now the position is most likely technically lost. Moreover it just wins itself, as White's play is very natural and clear.



21...♖a8 22.b3!

No need to hurry.

22...♔e6 23.♘c3

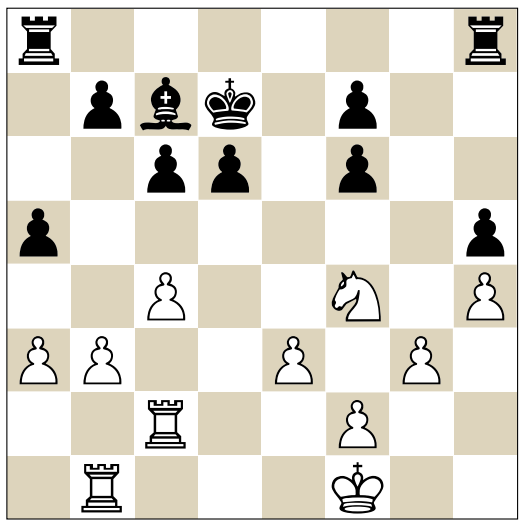
The knight has done its job on a4.

23...♔e7 24.♘e2 ♖gg8 25.♘f4 ♖h8 26.♘d3!

Keep jumping.

26...♗b6 27.♖ab1 ♔d7 28.♖c2 ♗c7 29.♘f4!

Once again, the most important thing is not to hurry.



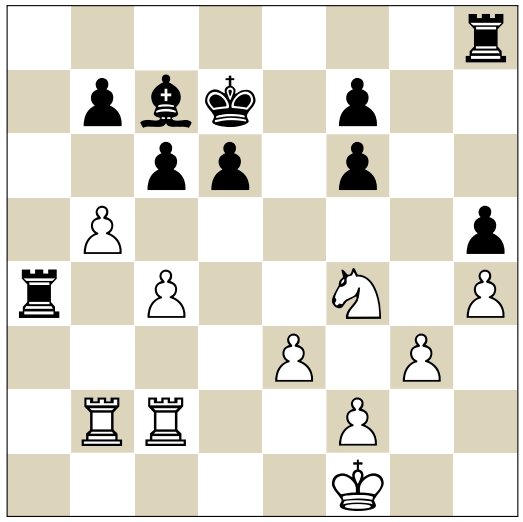
29...♖ae8 30.b4

White has improved all his pieces and it's time to advance a little.

30...axb4 31.axb4 ♖a8 32.b5 ♖a4 33.♖bb2!

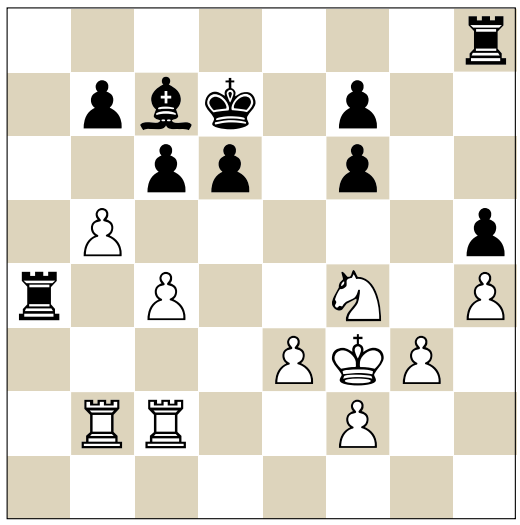
Black has just one rook on the open file, since the other one is doomed to defend the h5-pawn.

Using his quantitative advantage, White just takes over the a-file.



33...♖a5 34.♔g2 ♖a4 35.♔f3

Again, no hurry. I can improve my king first.



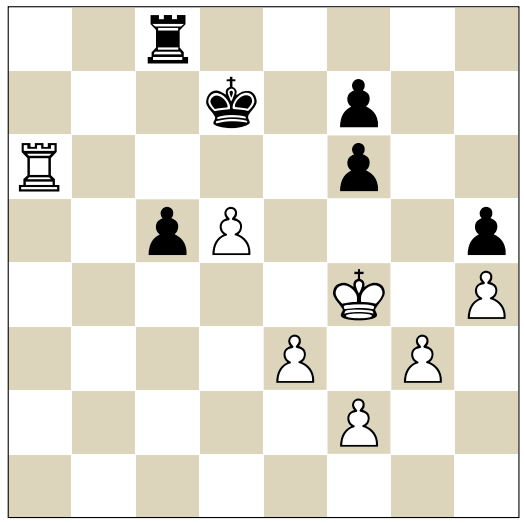
35...♖aa8 36.♖a2 ♖xa2 37.♖xa2 d5

Desperation, but the position was already completely hopeless.

Eventually White will find the courage and penetrate with the king: ♔e4-♔f5!, though of course he has to do that in the right moment, in order not to end up mated with ...♖e8-e5. Having said that, avoiding the mate is quite simple.

38.bxc6+ bxc6 39.cxd5 c5 40.♖a6 ♗xf4 41.♔xf4 ♖c8

Black is quite obviously lost. Taking the f6-pawn and then getting the rook back to a passive defence should win for White, but I chose a different way.

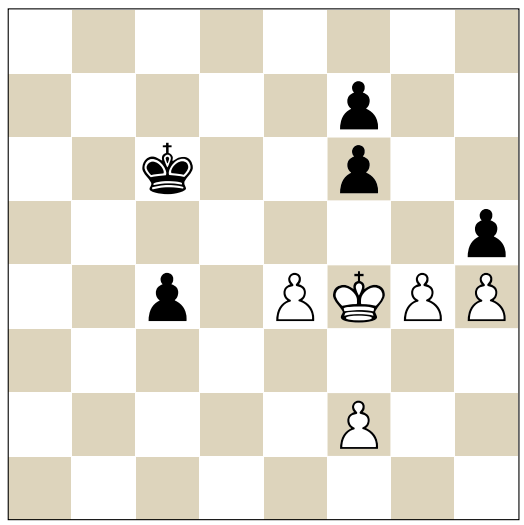


42.♖c6!?

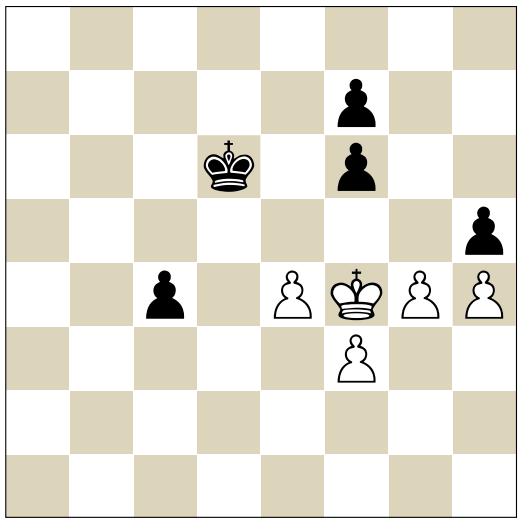
I didn't have to spend much time on my previous moves, so now I decided to use the luxury of spending my time on this move and forcing the win.

42...♖xc6 43.dxc6+ ♔xc6 44.g4 c4 45.e4!

Opening the road for the king to take care of the c-pawn.



45...♔d6 46.f3!
Actually the only winning move, but it's quite an obvious one. With the c-pawn under control White can take his time.

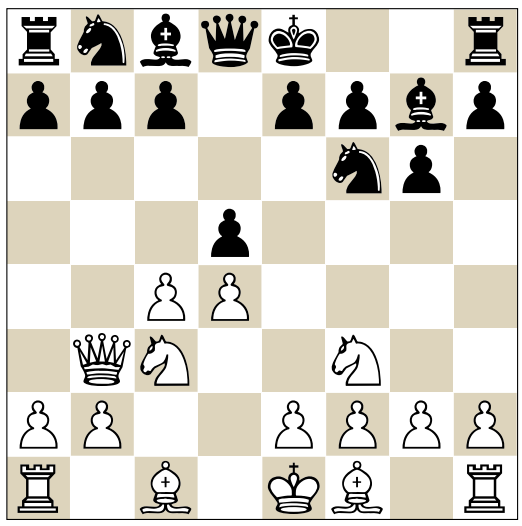


46...♔e6 47.♔e3
Black is completely lost.
47...♔e5 48.gxh5 f5 49.h6 f4+ 50.♔d2 ♔f6 51.h5
Black resigned.
A study-like pawn construction on the kingside. A pity that my opponent didn't have an extra pawn somewhere like on b3, which would have made the win look even more aesthetic. It's quite remarkable that it is possible to beat a strong player like Ivanchuk in such a simple manner that it doesn't require a single variation to explain what was going on! In fact, the endgame is tougher than it seems.
Later on I played a blitz game in a little tournament in Norway against Turov, who played a lot more precise and we ended up splitting the point. Once again, it's the Ivanchuk phenomenon. If you meet him on the right day, you are lucky, if not, then not.

18

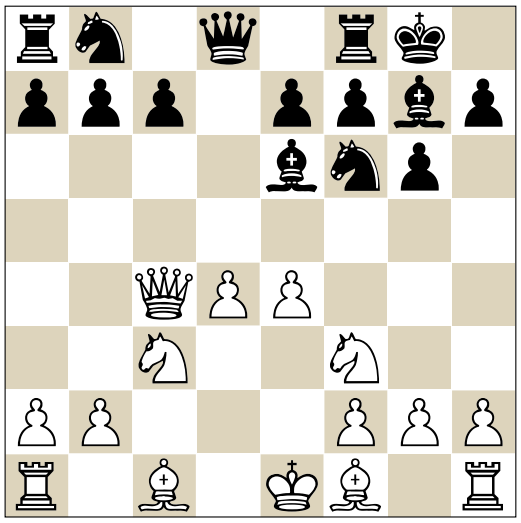
D97
Alexander Morozevich
Anish Giri
Biel 2012

The 2012 Biel tournament was quite important for me. I managed to play very well, facing the strongest opponents. This helped me to regain my confidence, which was quite low after a poor start of the year.
I came to the tournament having won back my rating at the Dutch Championship. In the first round I was facing the dangerous elite player from Russia, Alexander Morozevich.
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♗g7
The Grünfeld Defence has served me well on many occasions and this was not an exception.
5.♕b3
Morozevich had played quite a few games with the Russian System, so this didn't come as a surprise.

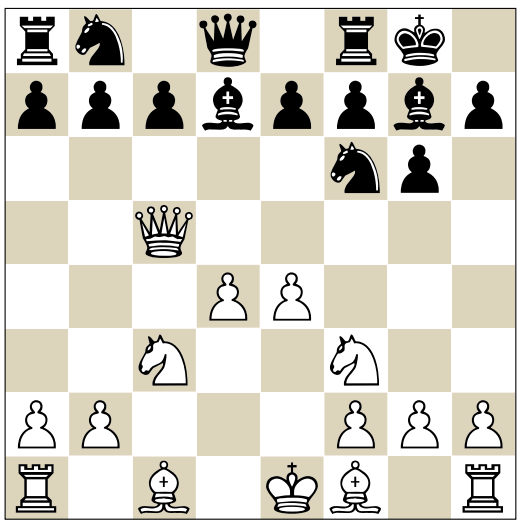


5...dxc4 6.♕xc4 0-0 7.e4 ♗e6!? A curious novelty that I had found a year earlier, when I felt a little too inspired (while procrasti-

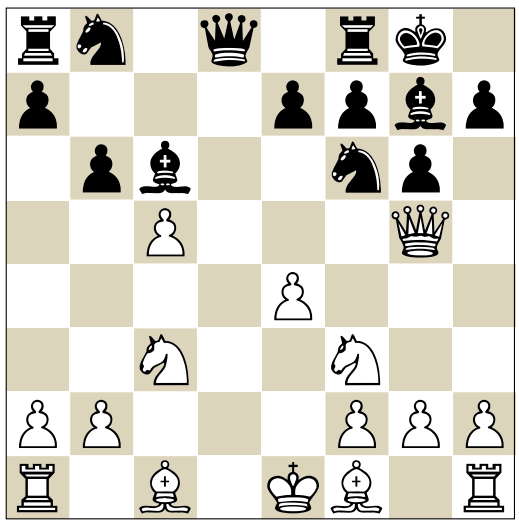
nating and refusing to study for my Dutch exam on the history of literature). Black is trying to get some objects to attack. I was very proud to see this move getting the approval of Grünfeld guru Peter Svidler, when he played it in the Russian Championship half a month later.



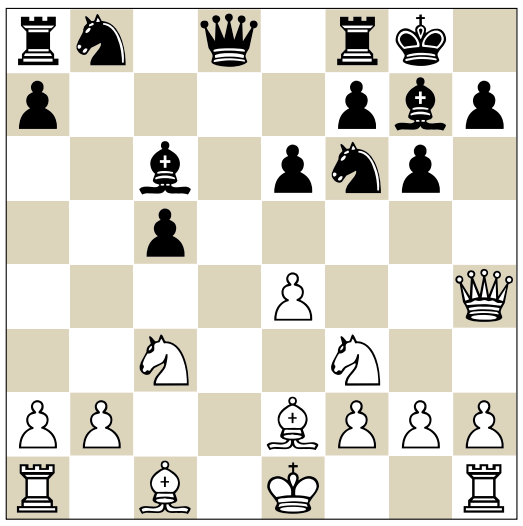
8.♕b5 I had analysed all queen retreats, obviously including this one.
8.d5 ♗c8! and ...c6 or ...e6 is coming. (8...♗g4?? 9.e5!)
8.♕d3 c5! 9.d5 ♗c8 was the game of Svidler. He played ...e6, outplayed Jakovenko and won.
8...♗d7 9.♕c5
I bet this move had the purpose of getting me out of my preparation and nothing more than that.



9.♕g5 could be answered by 9...♘c6!? with the idea to play ...♗g4 as well as ...♘b4, if White is careless.
9...b6 10.♕g5 I had seen this switch in my preparation, but failed to take it seriously. It has its point, but with so little development it looks somewhat silly anyway.
10...c5 11.dxc5 ♗c6
There were many moves, but I decided to just play what felt right, as I noticed that in the positions after Black gets ...c5 in, things almost always work for Black with some primitive and natural play.

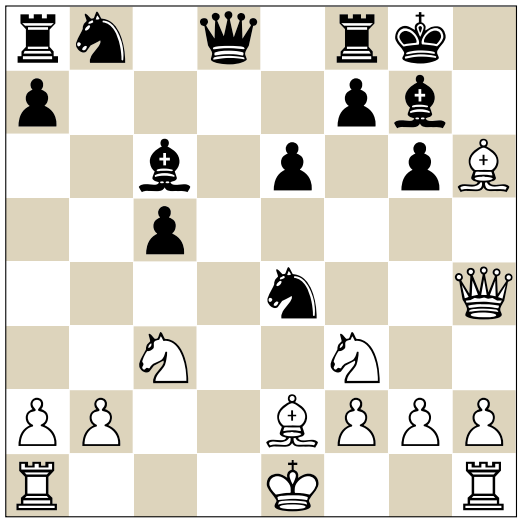


12.♕h4 bxc5 Again I had a few tempting options, but this felt the simplest. **13.♗e2 e6!** Starting a strong sequence and equalizing comfortably.



13...♘bd7 was my first instinct, but then White would have a much easier game after 14.0-0. (14.e5!?)

14.♗g5 h6! 15.♗xh6 ♘xe4!



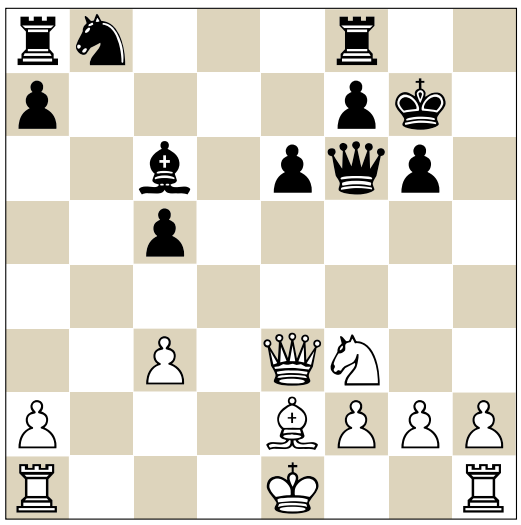
16.♕f4

Actually, I may already be slightly better after this move, but I didn't realize it.

16.♗g5 looked weird to me for two reasons: 16...♘xg5 (or 16...♕a5 17.0-0 ♘xc3 18.bxc3 ♘d7) 17.♘xg5 ♖e8 18.♖d1 ♘d7 19.0-0 ♖b8 and somehow the knight on g5 compensates for the dark-squared bishop.

16...♘xc3 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.bxc3 ♕f6 19.♕e3

The endgame is slightly better for Black, he has more central pawns.



19...♘d7 20.0-0 ♖ab8

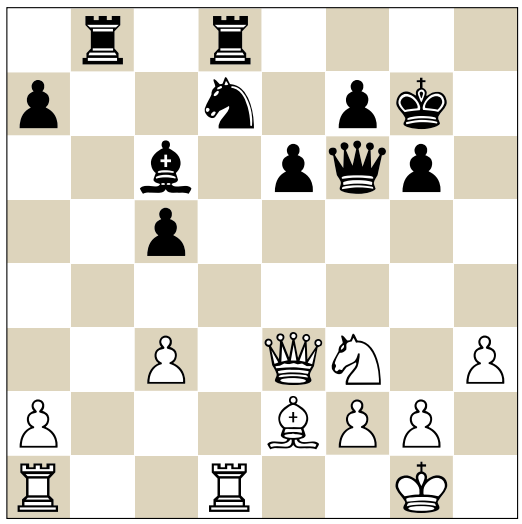
I must say that I failed to sense that I was actually better in this position. The pawn structure is a little confusing and even though I knew the e6 vs h2-pawn is certainly to my advantage, I somehow disliked the c3 vs c5 combination. A Karpov-Kasparov game comes to mind, where Karpov played c4, moved all his pieces backwards (I think ♘e1, ♗d1) and won convincingly. Here it's not even close to that, though.

I had seen 20...♘b6! , but I couldn't imagine that after 21.♕xc5 (21.c4 troubled me even more, because I had probably forgotten that after 21...♗xf3! 22.♗xf3 ♖ac8 I will have the d4-square available for my rook, with a clear, though only slight advantage) 21...♖ac8 I am actually standing better, thanks to my active pieces.

21.♖fd1 ♖fd8

I just wanted to put my rooks on the open files and eventually make a draw somewhere.

22.h3



22...♗d5

22...♗xf3 was always possible, but I absolutely mistakenly thought that the bishop was worth more than the

knight, as we have pawns all over the board. In fact I am just much more centralized: 23.♗xf3 ♕e5! and Black is slightly better.

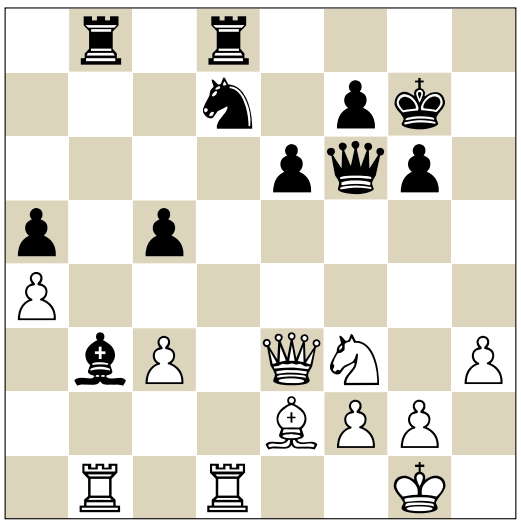
23.a4 a5

Again taking was good.

23...♖b3 24.♖ac1 brings me nothing.

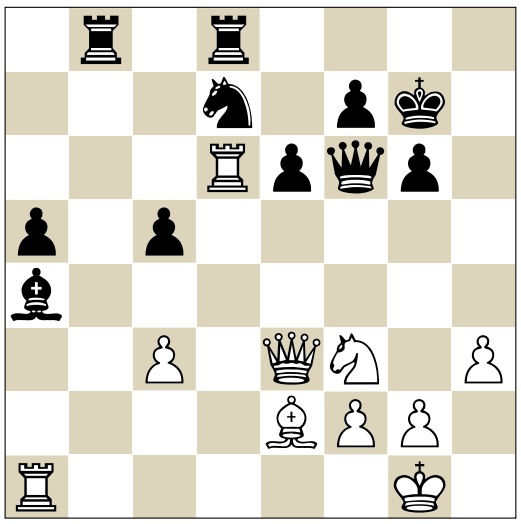
24.♖ab1 ♗b3

I got so confused by too many equal options that I decided that before I start my favourite messing-up I will just exchange everything and make a draw.



25.♖d6 Interesting was 25.♖xd7!? ♖xd7 26.♘e5 with the idea to go ♘g4 after the rook moves. It is sufficient for a draw, but not more.

25...♗xa4 26.♖a1

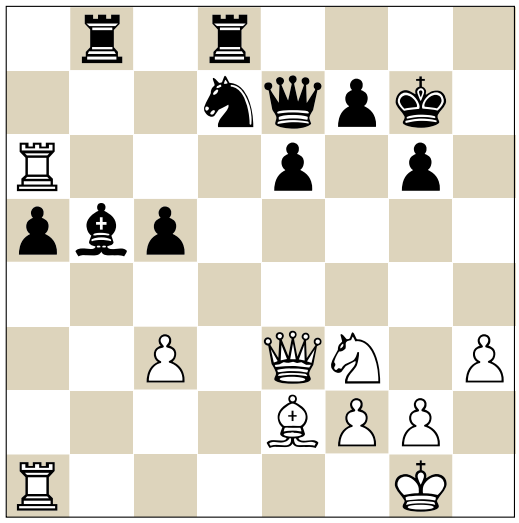


26...♕e7

26...♖b6!? was my initial intention, but then I couldn't evaluate the position after 27.♖xb6 ♘xb6 28.♕xc5 ♘d5! 29.♖xa4 ♘xc3 30.♕c4!?. Still, probably my feeling that the position is fine is totally correct. Yet, it's complicated and I didn't feel like suddenly making a mess out of it: 30...♘xa4 31.♕xa4 ♕c3 and after 32.g3 I have 32...♖b8!. I missed this one (32...♕b4? 33.♕a1+! was a scenario I saw and correctly judged that I should avoid it). Now the rook enters.

27.♖a6 ♗b5

Here I was a little unhappy about the fact that I am desperately trying to make a draw from a comfortable position, but eventually I didn't mind simplifying and forcing the draw myself.



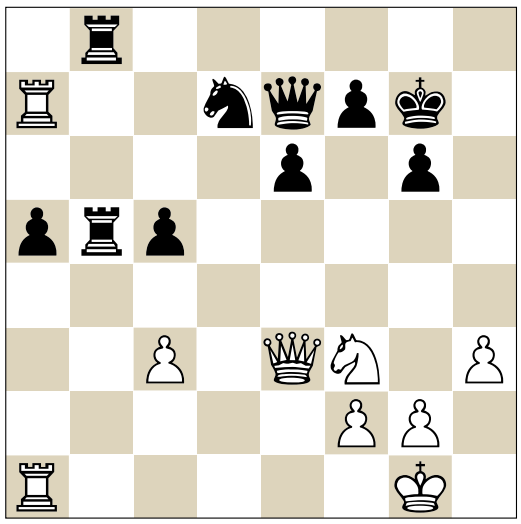
28.♗xb5

Better was 28.♖6xa5! ♗xe2 29.♕xe2 ♖b7. It's important to keep control of the seventh rank. The position is slightly better for White, practically speaking (the computer's assessment –0.05 is really shy), but with a couple of precise moves the game would turn into a draw very quickly.

28...♖xb5 29.♖a7?!

Morozevich tries to trick me in time-trouble, but surprisingly in just a couple of moves I will take over his role. There was nothing wrong with 29.♖6xa5.

29...♖db8! Now suddenly White has to slightly lightly watch out not to get under slight light pressure ☺. Such kind of little turns, however, can have a big impact in time-trouble.

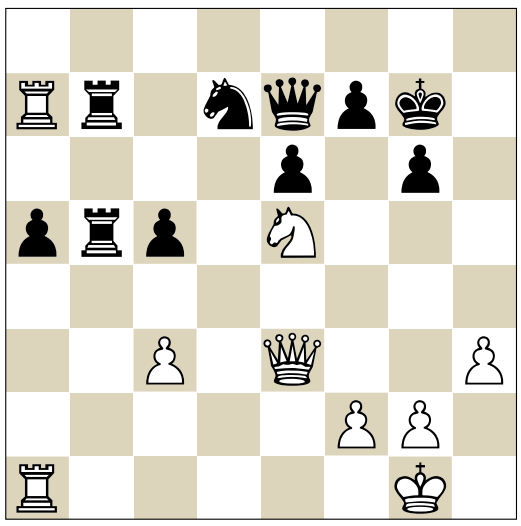


30.♘e5

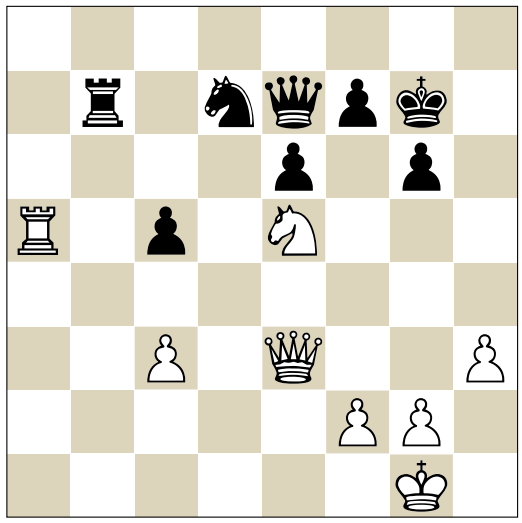
30.♕f4!? was maybe the neatest way to render the position totally equal. The d6-h2 diagonal is crucial.

30...♖8b7

Only here did I suddenly realize that I may actually have some small practical chances to trick my opponent somewhere in the time-trouble. Trick. Huh. Little did I know.



31.♖xb7 ♖xb7 32.♖xa5



32...♕d6??

One of the reasons for this inexplicable blunder was that I suddenly took a different posture. I relaxed and realized that I am now the one who is seeking for some small chances and not the other way around. This attitude made me smarter and cleverer, but less alert. While I thought I was keeping extra options after the obligatory f4, I had totally forgotten about any possible dangers.

33.f4??

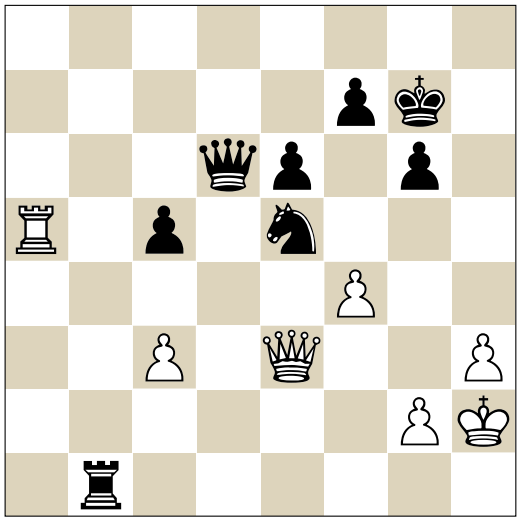
It was good that I hadn't noticed that I had blundered so terribly, so my opponent didn't feel any blunder-vibes. But then again, a player like Morozevich doesn't need any vibes to find a simple tactic. The thing is, sometimes strange things happen.

He, too, failed to see 33.♕h6+! (oops) 33...♔g8 (33...♔f6 34.♕f4+) 34.♕h8+! ♔xh8 35.♘xf7+, and White wins.

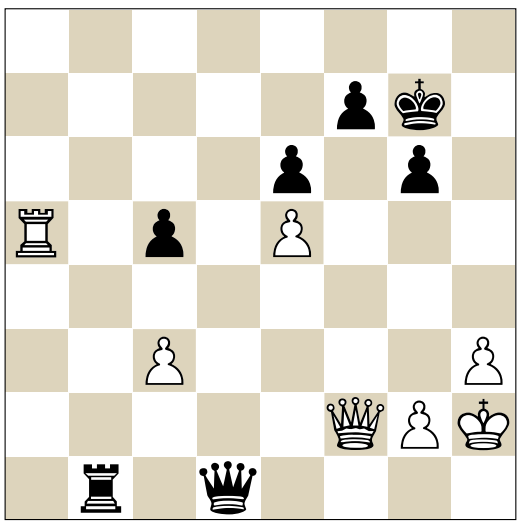
33...♖b1+

I disliked all the 'extra options' that I had won with my blunder and decided that this was the best practical chance.

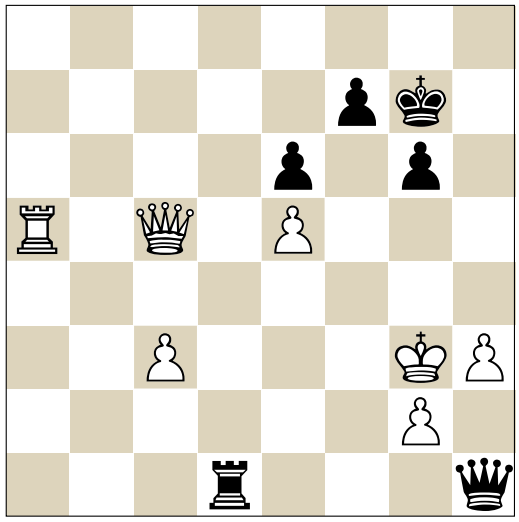
34.♔h2 ♘xe5



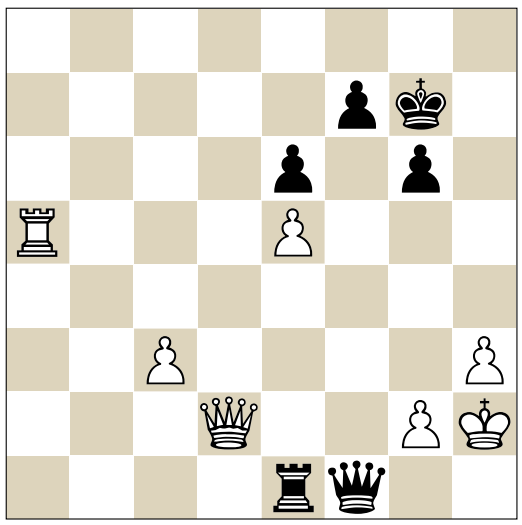
35.fxe5
Morozevich decided not to suffer in a slightly worse endgame and probably rightly so.
35.♕xe5+ ♕xe5 36.fxe5 c4 37.♖c5 ♖e1 38.♖xc4 ♖xe5 is still slightly worse for White, as I will have a strong passed e-pawn. On the other hand, the position obviously should be drawn, mathematically speaking.
35...♕d1 36.♕f2!
A very strong move. Alexander forces my rook to sort of shut down my queen in the corner. Here I believed that the game would be drawn quickly, as I didn't see any real winning attempts.



36...♕h1+ 37.♔g3 ♖f1 38.♕xc5 ♖d1



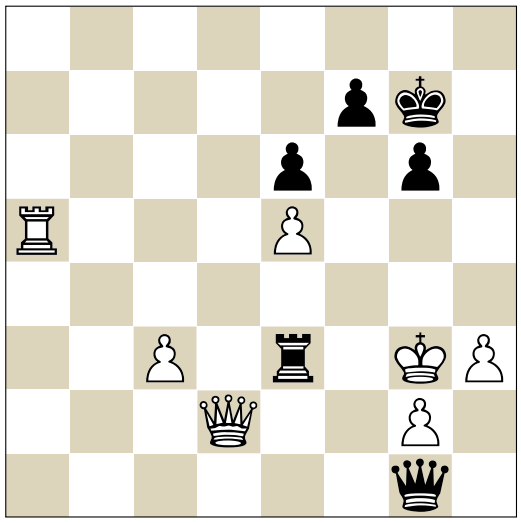
39.♕e3?! I didn't understand this move. A try for a win some people said, but it definitely isn't anything even close to that. He should have played 39.♕f2! and I think I would have just repeated the moves, as there is nothing better: 39...♖f1 40.♕c5 ♖c1!? 41.♕e3!.
39...♕f1 40.♔h2 ♖e1 In the heat of time-trouble I thought that I was suddenly winning, as the only move I saw, which was 41.♕d4, was losing. However, we made the time control, time was added, water was drunk and the right move was found.
41.♕d2!



41...♕g1+ I didn't see any ideas to win and since I saw that I can nearly always return to the initial position, I

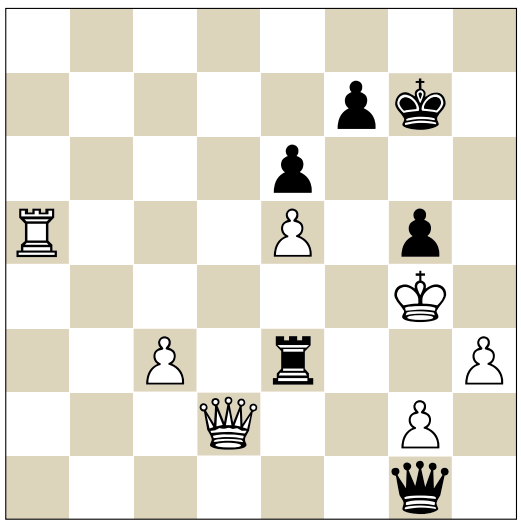
decided to check my opponent here. 41...♕h1+!? 42.♔g3 ♕g1 is a cute zugzwang! For example 43.♖b5 (43.c4? ♖e3+ 44.♔g4 ♖e4+ 45.♔g3 ♖xc4) 43...♕f1 and ♖d1 is a threat, so the only move is 44.♖b2 ♖xe5 and Black is just better.

42.♔g3 ♖e3+

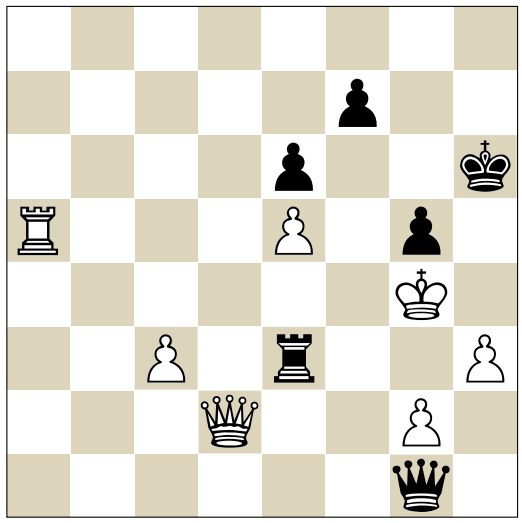


43.♔f4? Provoking me too much. The good thing was that I had seen already a couple of moves back that this clever move can only get White into trouble. After 43.♔g4! I would probably have gone back with my rook and maybe I would have found that brilliant zugzwang idea, but even then, with good defence White should be holding: 43...♖e1 44.♔g3 ♕f1 45.♔h2 ♕h1+!? 46.♔g3 ♕g1.

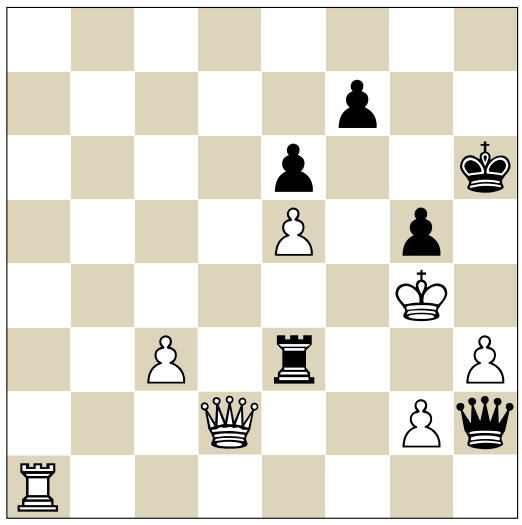
43...g5+ 44.♔g4



44...♔h6! Now the curious threat is ♕h2 and it's not so easy to find a defence.



45.♖a4? This loses, even if after a long think both of us thought it drew and that it was equally dangerous as 45.♖a8. This one, however, loses by force, while the other one doesn't. The original intention of my opponent was 45.♖a1, but then I obviously get my trick in: 45...♕h2!!



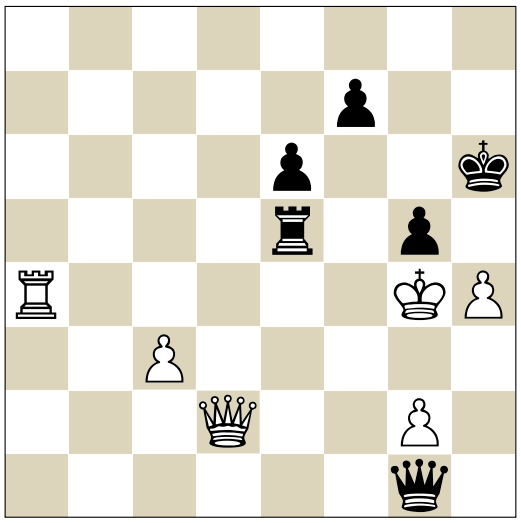
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

46.♕xe3 ♕xg2+ 47.♕g3 ♕e4+ and wins.

The saving move was 45.♖a8!! and although White is hanging by a thread: 45...♖e4+ (45...♖xe5 46.♖h8+ ♔g7 47.♖h5! f5+ 48.♔xg5 and there is no mate) 46.♔f3 ♖xe5

47.♕d3 ♖f5+ 48.♔g3 and Black is better, there is no forced win.

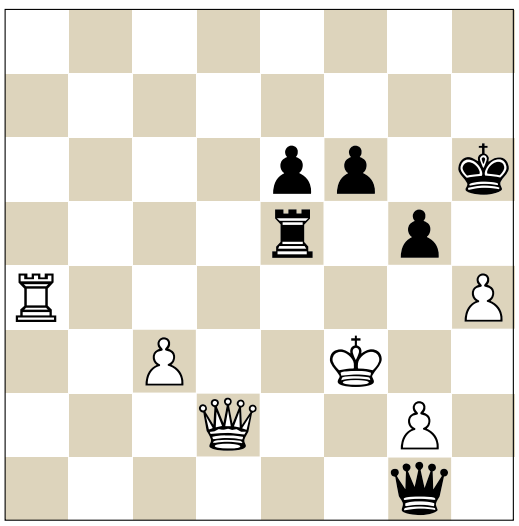
45...♖xe5 46.h4



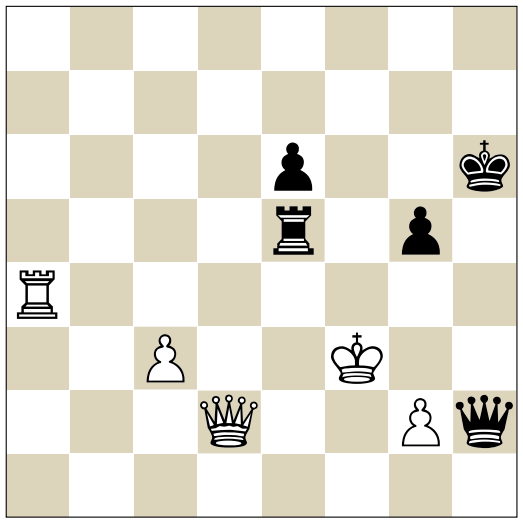
46...f6? I couldn't find a win after the checks checks checks and I felt that this move should be solid and good enough to win, so I went for it pretty quickly.

The winning line started with 46... f5+! , but I didn't take enough time to find the brilliant follow-up: 47.♔f3 ♕f1+ 48.♔g3 f4+ 49.♔g4 and here 49...♕b5!! 50.♖b4 ♖e3!! (good, isn't it?) 51.♕xe3 ♕f5+!.

47.♔f3! I missed this strong defensive move, which is also the only one to stay in the game. Now I realized there is no forced win, so I decided to chase the king from the kingside towards the queenside and see what happens...



47...♕h2!? 48.hxg5+ fxg5



49.♖e4??

The sudden end to a thriller. I can't say I minded too much.

49.♖g4! was required. Now I was planning 49...♖f5+ 50.♔e2 ♕g1! 51.♔d3! and it feels like something should be there, but it seems that there is no forced way to use White's awkward piece coordination. Still, the game goes on and White has to constantly come up with cold-blooded moves.

49...♖f5+ 50.♔e3 ♕g3+

White resigned. An adventure and a great start!

19

D77
Anish Giri
Li Chao
Tromsø 2013

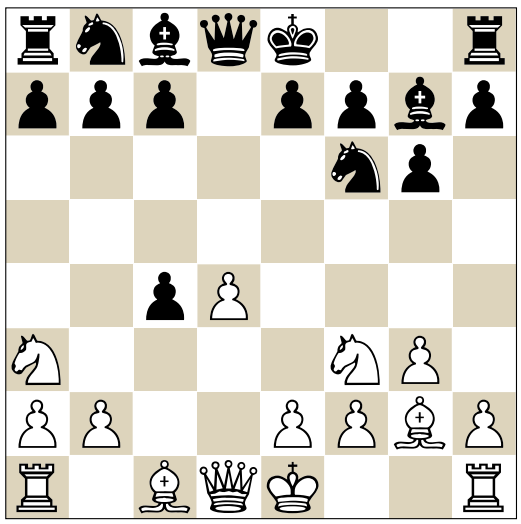
This was my first game of the second round in the World Cup in Tromso in the north of Norway. In the first round I beat Salem 1,5-0,5 and now I was facing a strong opponent from China, the young and promising Li Chao, known in the ChessBase database as Li Chao2. This is quite misleading, as he is not only the strongest Li Chao around, but also one of the strongest Chinese players in general.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘f3 ♗g7 4.g3

I have achieved quite a few good results in this seemingly harmless system with both colours.

4...d5 5.♗g2 dxc4 6.♘a3

I had prepared this system for the first two rounds, as both Salem and Li Chao employ the same system in the g3 Grünfeld! That was quite useful and saved lazy me a lot of time.

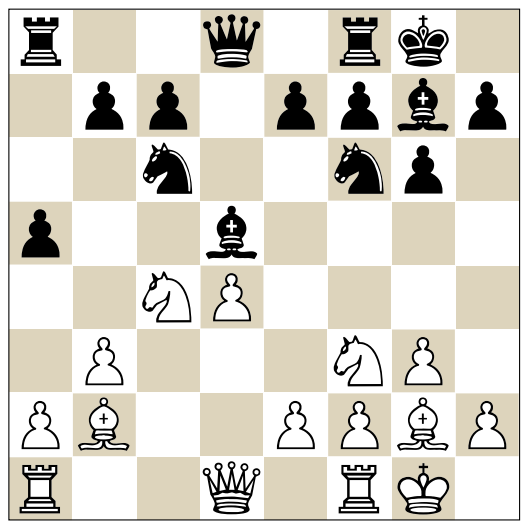


6...0-0 7.0-0 ♘c6!?

7...c3 8.bxc3 c5 is the main-line. Against Salem I got an advantage after 9.♖e1 ♕a5 10.♗b2 ♖d8 11.e4.

8.♘xc4 ♗e6 9.b3 ♗d5 10.♗b2 a5

The tabiya. Now Black wants to play ...a4. Initially I was of the opinion that a2-a4 is simple and strong, perhaps influenced by my game with Ivanchuk, where he played it against me with white. However, the day before the game (that's usually the only time when the head is working, not only the engine) I suddenly realized why Nikolic kept placing the knight so awkwardly on e3.



11.♘e3! ♗e4 12.a3!

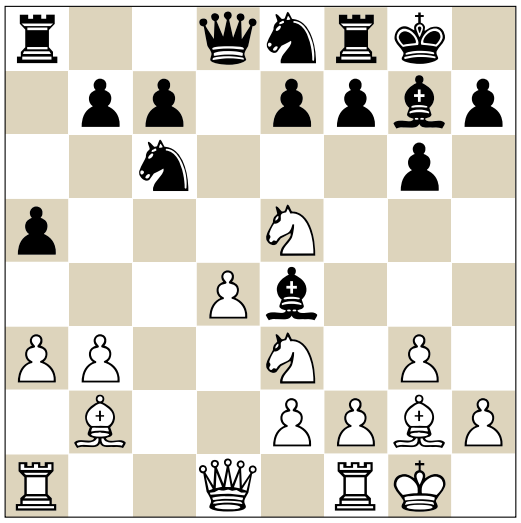
The point. Now White doesn't have to fear the ...a5-a4 push and the knight is going back to c4 on the very next move. It is only after a very long think that Houdini starts to understand the depth of this concept.

12...♘e8?!

Logical, but allowing the following:

13.♘e5!

Now, in case of Black capturing the knight on e5, the one on e8 will be out of moves.



13...♗xg2 14.♘xg2?!

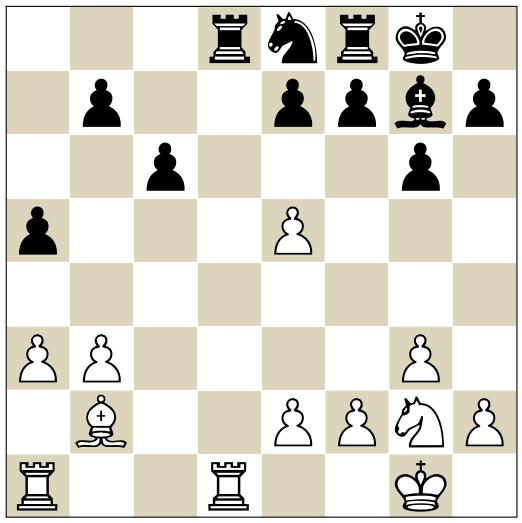
I couldn't recall my preparation, but finally I decided not to put my opponent in a desperate situation, as desperate people are in my opinion the most dangerous.

Practically the only way to complicate matters would be 14.♔xg2 f5!? and I must be frank, even though I don't believe it, it still looks a little scary to me.

14...♘xe5

Now this is possible. Still, White is playing for an advantage.

15.dxe5 c6 16.♕xd8 ♖xd8 17.♖fd1

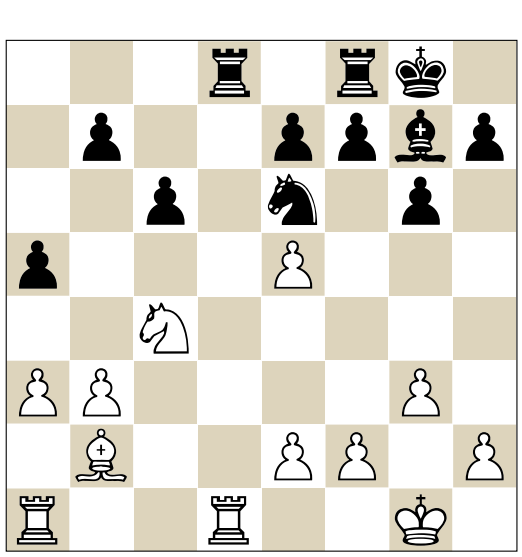


17.♘e3 ♖d2!? and the rook can be trapped only at the cost of a few pawns.

17...♘c7 18.♘e3 ♘e6

18...b5 is an option, but here too White should be somehwat better, using the queenside weaknesses.

19.♘c4



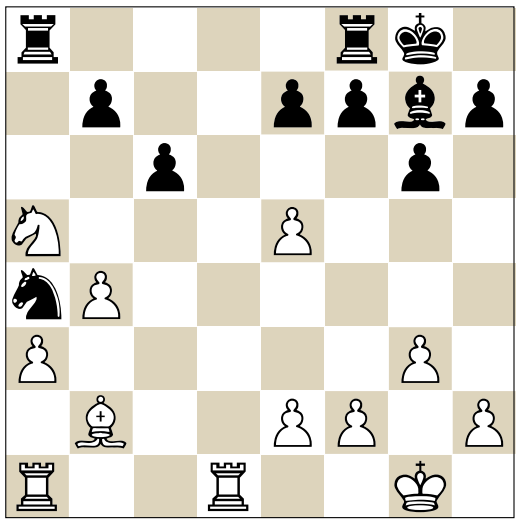
19...♘c5?

Somewhat careless, as one should always pay extra attention when given risk-free pressure by your opponent. I had obviously anticipated this move and the next few moves were played more or less instantly.

Instead, 19...♖a8 bothered me a lot, as I didn't see a way to gain any-

thing concrete, although White can claim an advantage on general grounds: 20.a4!? ♖fb8!? (20...♘c5? seemed possible to me, but I missed the final knight jump: 21.♗a3 ♘xb3 22.♖ab1 b5 23.♘b6! – this one I still saw, but after 23...♖a6 24.♘d7! escaped my attention) 21.♘b6 ♖a6 22.♘d7 ♖c8 23.♖ac1 with a white edge.

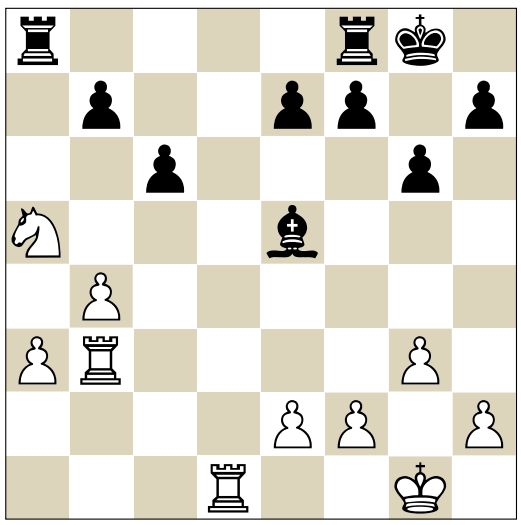
20.♘xa5 ♖a8 21.b4 ♘a4



22.♖ab1 22.♗d4?? is a blunder because of 22...c5!.

22...♘xb2 23.♖xb2 ♗xe5 24.♖b3!

Precisely to this square. Only here did my opponent sink into deep thought.

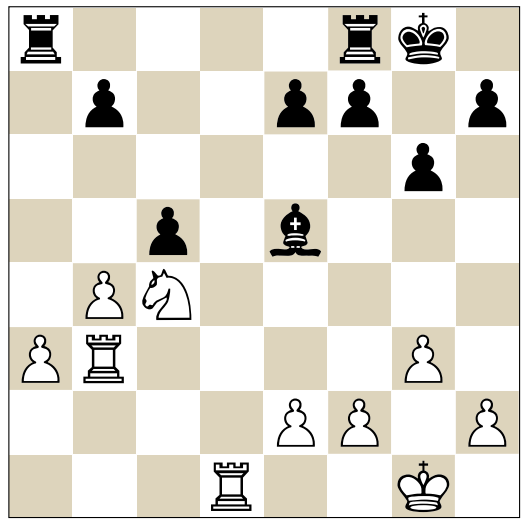


24...c5

This is what he must have been counting on. And indeed, for a long while during his enormously long think I was worried that I wouldn't be able to win this game due to the inevitable simplifications.

Until suddenly I noticed a strong positional idea.

25.♘c4



25...♗d4?

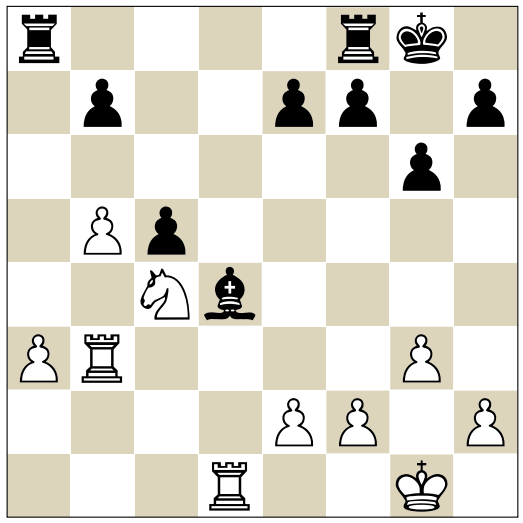
Too natural not to be played.

But better was 25...♗d6!. Here the bishop is less vulnerable. I think we both neglected this move for aesthetic reasons. The bishop looks like a giant pawn. 26.b5. But the stability of the bishop makes Black's life somewhat easier, although I still consider White's chances to be quite serious. (26.♘xd6 exd6 27.♖xd6 c4! 28.♖c3 b5 29.♖d5 is a fifty-fifty situation.)

26.b5!

Ironically, at first I didn't even see this move. But after some time I started drifting towards the conclusion that White is winning.

White has many ideas, the one I favoured the most was ♘b6 followed by a4 and the eventual regroupment ♖a3-♘c4 back and a5.



On 26.e3 b5! is the nice point.

26...♖fd8

After 26...♔g7 White can just go e3 followed by ♖d7, but it is the following idea that seemed very aesthetic to me: 27.♘b6 ♖a7 28.a4!? f5 29.e3 ♗f6 30.♖a3! e6 31.♘c4 ♖d8 32.♖xd8 ♗xd8 33.a5.

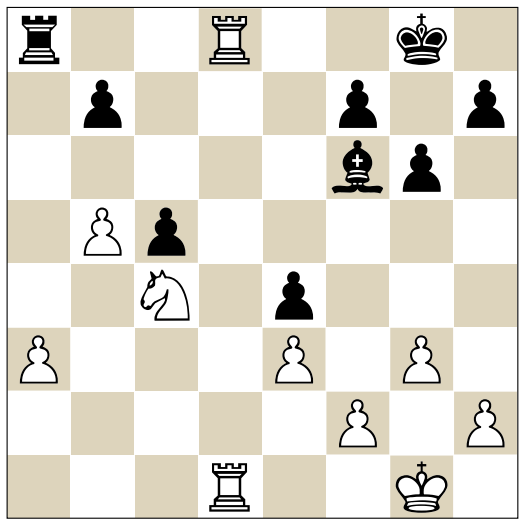
27.♖bd3 e5 This only creates an additional weakness, but on the other hand, one wouldn't want to go back with his rook.

In case of 27...e6? 28.♘b6! wins a whole piece: 28...♖ab8 (28...♖a5 29.e3 ♖xb5 30.♘c4) 29.e3 ♗f6 30.♘d7!.

28.e3 e4 29.♖3d2 ♗f6

30.♖xd8+

I had to calculate a forced win here, but the task wasn't too difficult.

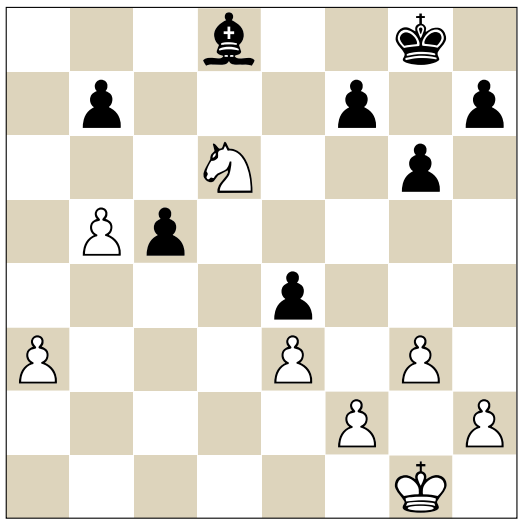


30...♖xd8

After 30...♗xd8 White has many ways to play. Personally I fancied 31.b6 (31.♖d7! b6 32.♔g2! is for some reason stronger according to the computer, perhaps because Black is in total zugzwang?) 31...♔g7 32.♖d5.

31.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 32.♘d6

White must go for the pawn. On the c4-square alone one can't win a game.



32...♗e7

32...b6 33.♘xe4 and White is in time to go back to the blockade: 33...f5 34.♘d2 ♔f7 35.♔f1 ♔e6 36.♔e2 ♔d5 37.♔d3.

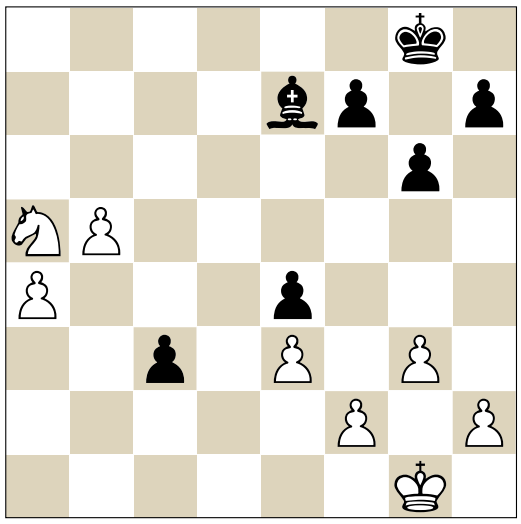
33.♘xb7!

Intuitively it felt safer to take the e4-pawn, but after some thinking I realized that it would complicate my task. Instead I calculated a forced win, although it did cost me some nerves as I realized that it's a matter of half a tempo.

33...c4 34.♘a5 c3 35.a4!

Now Black would need his king in the square of my pawns and the set-up with the pawn on c2 and the bishop on b4, making it impossible for my king to cross towards the

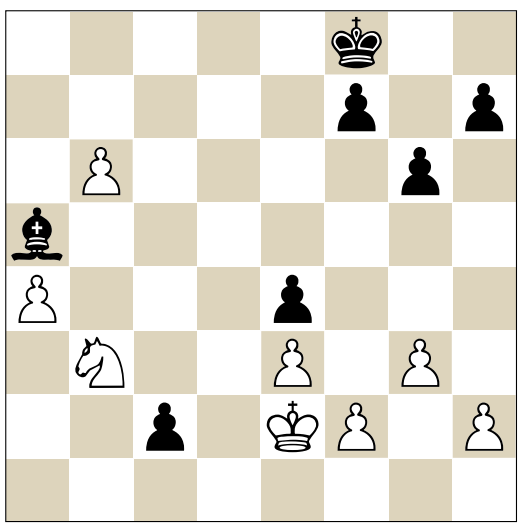
c2-pawn. Fortunately I am just in time.



35...c2 36.♘b3 ♗d8

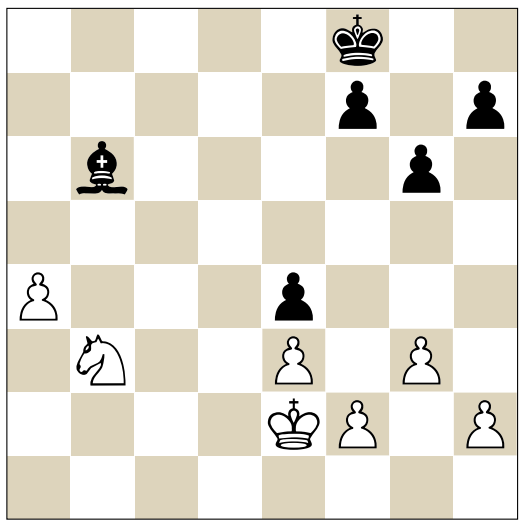
36...♗b4! is pointed out by the engines as the toughest choice, but the win is obvious for a human: 37.b6 ♔f8 38.b7 ♗d6 39.♔f1 ♔e7 40.♔e2 ♔d7 41.♔d2 ♔c7 42.♔xc2 ♗b4 and now, after putting this position on the board, as insisted by my hard-working Dutch second Jan Smeets, the win came by itself: 43.♘d2 f5 44.f3! and by the time that Black will pick up the a4-pawn he will lose his kingside.

37.♔f1 ♔f8 38.♔e2 ♗a5 39.b6! As promised, just in time!

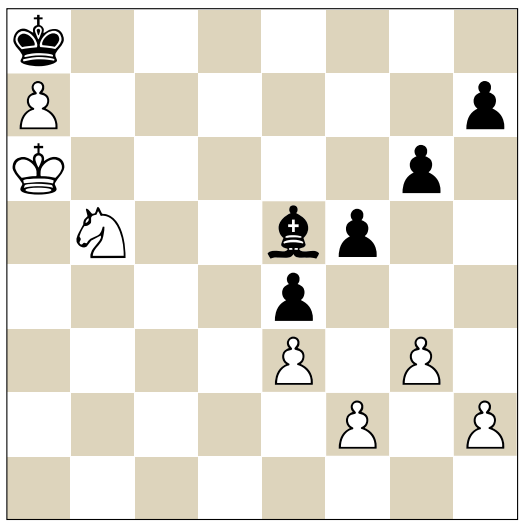


39...c1♕ 40.♘xc1 ♗xb6 41.♘b3

Now the win is easy.



41...♔e7 42.a5 ♗a7 43.♔d2 ♔d6 44.♔c3 f5 45.♔c4 ♔c6 46.♘d4+ ♔b7 47.♔b5 ♗b8 48.a6+ ♔a8 49.♔b6 ♗e5 50.♘b5 ♔b8 51.a7+ ♔a8 52.♔a6



Black resigned.

The absolute triumph of the knight versus the bishop.

20

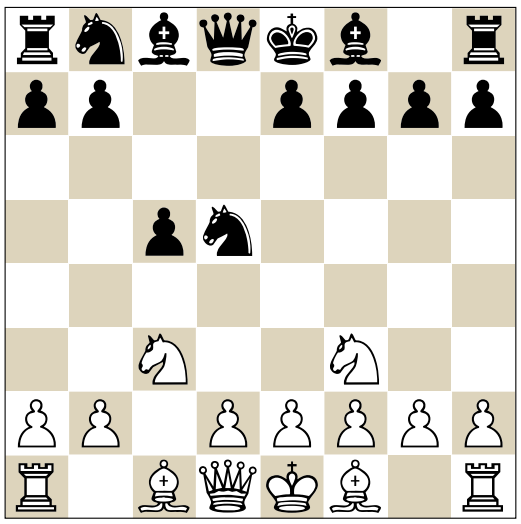
A34
Hikaru Nakamura
Anish Giri
Wijk aan Zee 2014

I played quite solidly in Wijk aan Zee this year and at the outset of the last round I was on +2, still unbeaten. However, one shouldn't get confused in top tournaments, where every game is a big challenge.

In the final round I had to face the ever aggressive American star Hikaru Nakamura and I was looking forward to another big battle. In fact, my games with Hikaru are always very tense and we both have scored quite a few memorable victories against each other.

1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5

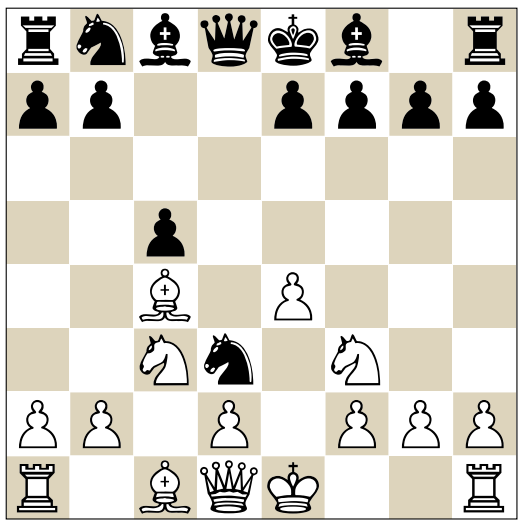
This is the new Anti-Grünfeld of some sort. If White wants he can transpose to the Grünfeld with 5.d4, but a couple of months before this game I showed good preparation against Hikaru exactly in that opening, so he decided not to test me there this time.



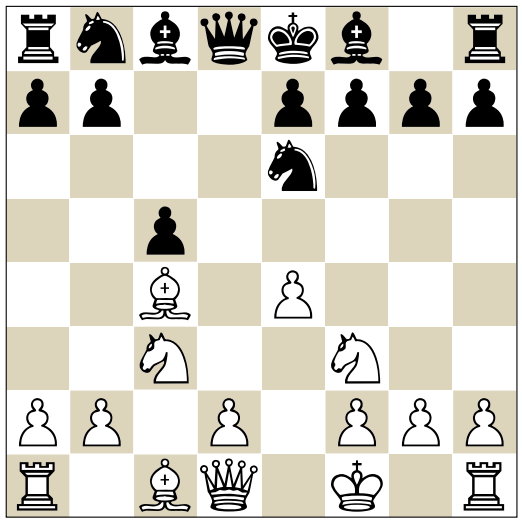
5.e4 ♘b4 5...♘xc3 6.dxc3! is known to lead to a slightly better endgame for White due to the pawn on c5, which should stand on c7(6) in this symmetric pawn structure.

6.♗c4 ♘d3+

A very old and somewhat forgotten line that leads to fascinating play.



7.♔e2 ♘f4+ 8.♔f1 ♘e6



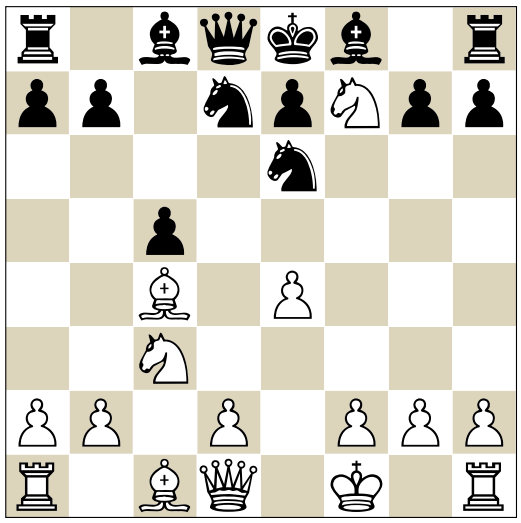
9.♘e5!?

I didn't remember this move and felt somewhat confused. In fact, it has already been played in some old high level games.

9.b4!? is the main move, which I tried myself against Rustam Kasimdzhanov.

9.d3 is of course also a move to be considered.

9...♘c6?! I thought for a very long time and finally decided to keep it safe and get rid of the annoying knight. 9...♘d7?? was tempting, but only briefly, as after 10.♘xf7! it becomes apparent that the black king gets into trouble:

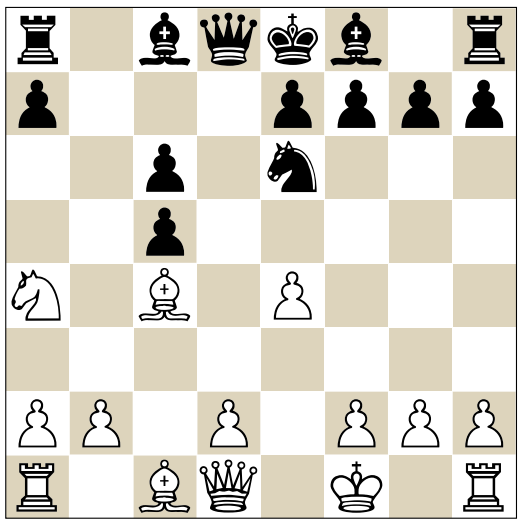


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

10...♔xf7 11.♗xe6+ ♔xe6 12.♕b3+ ♔d6 (12...♔f6 13.♘d5+!) 13.d4! etc. I also considered 9...g6 and 9...♕d6 (c7) which are better moves than the one in the game, but finally I saw some ghosts and decided to keep it safe, judging that in a practical game I will have enough compensation for my poor pawn structure.

10.♘xc6 bxc6 11.♘a4

This came a little unexpected, so I had to take even more time...

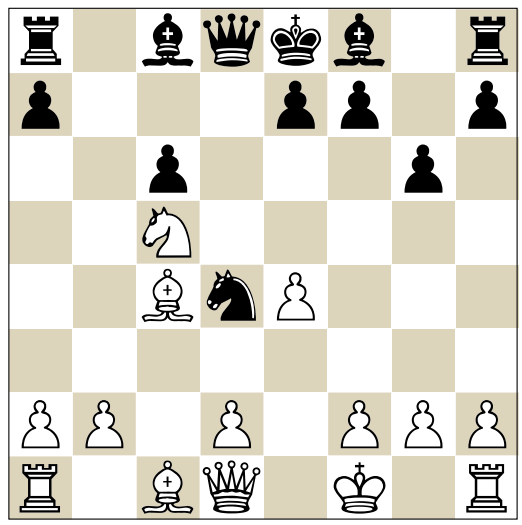


11...♘d4!?

11...g6 12.♗xe6 ♗xe6 13.♘xc5 felt a little dry. After 13...♗g7 14.♘xe6 fxe6 15.d3 0-0 16.♕e2 ♗d4 Black definitely keeps some compensation for the pawn, but there is clearly no fun.

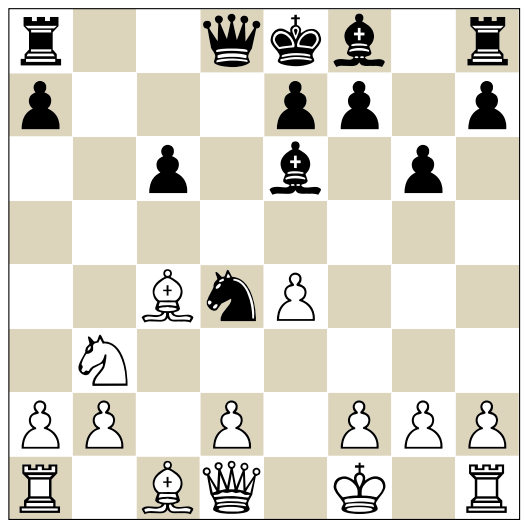
12.♘xc5 g6

I was nevertheless eager to develop my bishop to the long diagonal.



13.♘b3 ♗e6!?

My point. Once again, I wanted to keep some dynamic possibilities and I wasn't aiming for a dull position for merely two results.

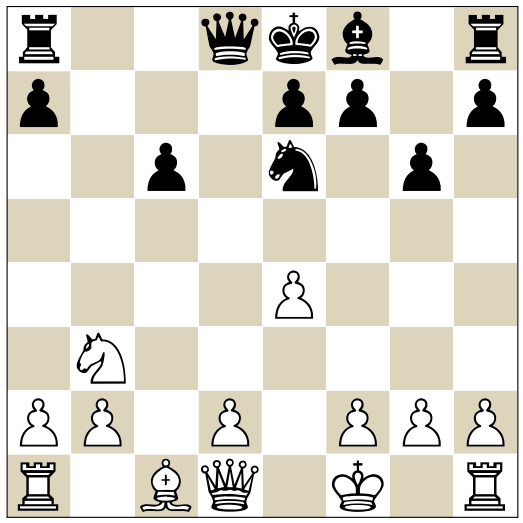


14.♗xe6

An interesting idea was 14.d3!? ♗g7 (14...♗xc4 15.dxc4 ♘xb3 16.♕xb3) 15.♘xd4 ♗xc4 16.dxc4 ♗xd4 with

compensation for the pawn, though here too, White will soon consolidate and Black will face an unpleasant task.

14...♘xe6



15.♕c2!?

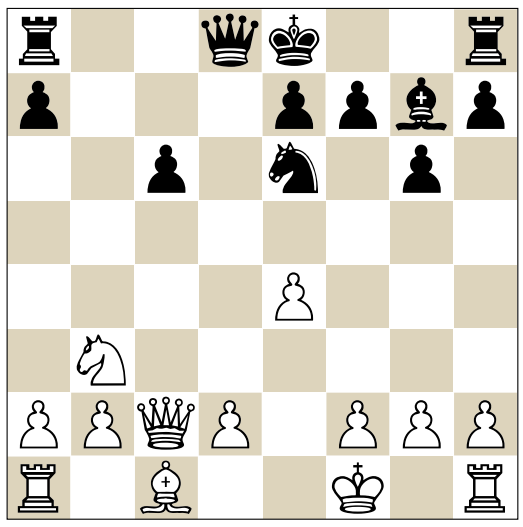
Very ambitious. Now I decided to make a statement.

The quieter alternative was 15.d3 ♗g7 16.♕c2 0-0 17.♗e3 a5!? with decent compensation.

15...♗g7!

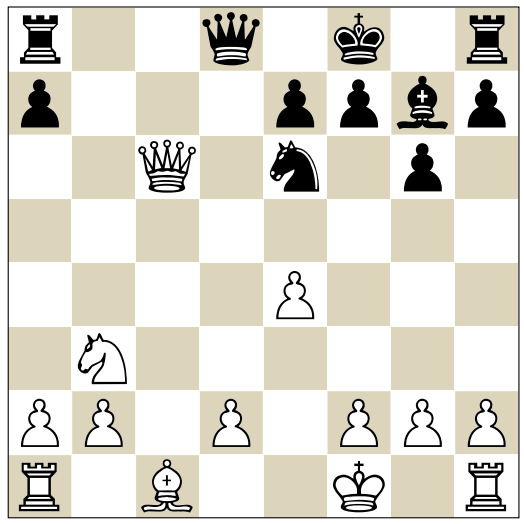
Otherwise I am just too slow. Now I keep some compensation for (by now) two pawns. Fortunately in a practical game it was enough for a draw...

Next time, though, I should perhaps not be throwing my pawns around.



16.♕xc6+ ♔f8

The king is a little awkward here, but I was happy about the c1-bishop, which looks quite silly.

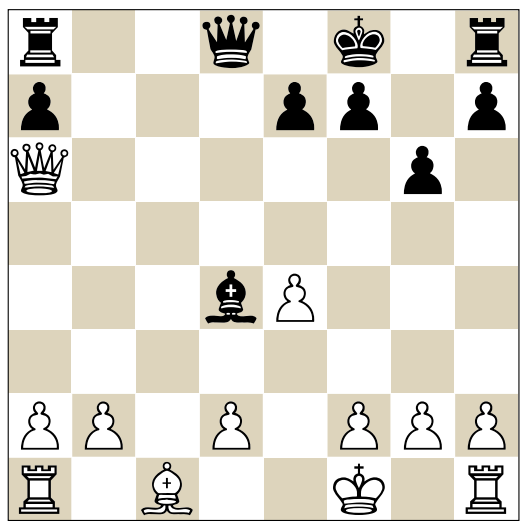


17.♕a6?!

Logical, but in fact the d3-square wasn't as essential as we thought.

17.h4! ♕d3+ (17...♖c8!? is objectively a better move) 18.♔g1 (18.♔e1! is good too) 18...♖d8 was my idea. I thought my position was superb, but I missed that after 19.♖h3 ♕e2 20.d4! White is suddenly developed and is taking over.

17...♘d4! 18.♘xd4 ♗xd4

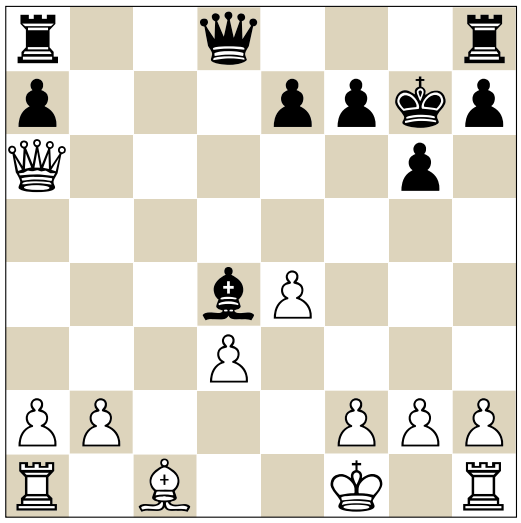


19.d3?!

It was wiser to get the queen home first. And only then shut the doors: 19.♕e2! ♔g7 20.d3 when Black

doesn't have full compensation for both pawns, but the game continues.

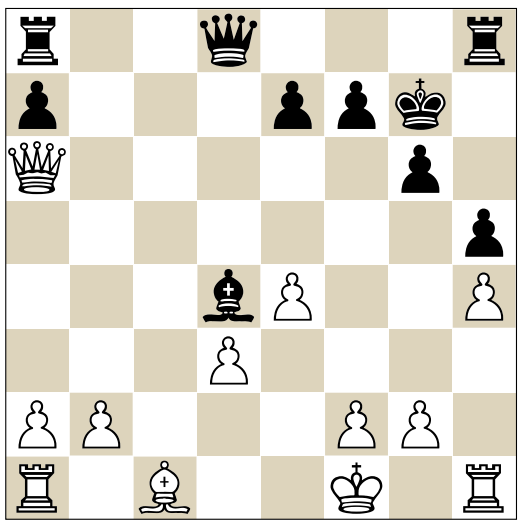
19...♔g7



From now on I have full compensation. My pieces are mobilized and the bishop on d4 fully compensates for both pawns.

20.h4 h5

I saw a simple plan to improve my pieces so I didn't think for too long here.

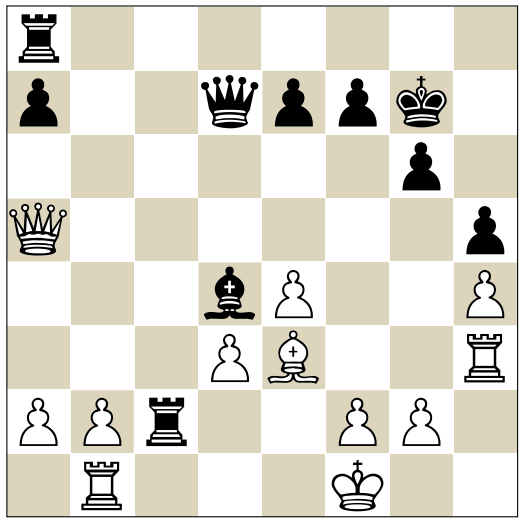


21.♖h3 ♕d7! 22.♖b1 ♖hc8 23.♗e3 ♖c2

This is all natural. It is clear that eventually Black will regain the material and the position will simplify. Now, however, Hikaru took his time and found the best move.

24.♕a5!

This one made me realize I still have to make a precise move or two to regain both my pawns. However I managed to live up to the challenge.

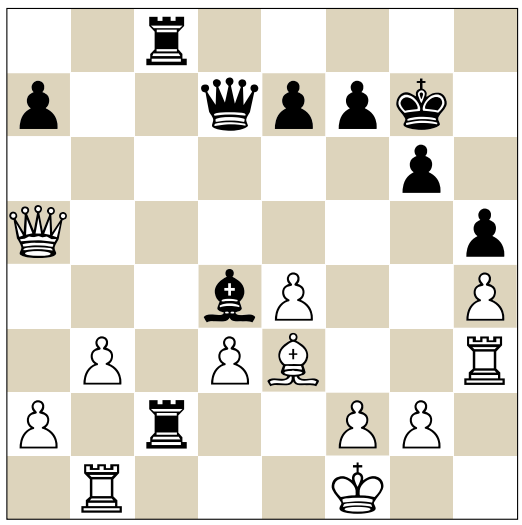


24...♖b8!

24...♖ac8 25.♕d5! is slightly better for White, when I am somehow not able to win back the pawns.

25.b3 ♖bc8!

Provoking b3 weakened the a2-pawn, which is important after ♕d5.



26.♔g1

As 26.♕d5 ♕xd5 27.exd5 ♗xe3 28.♖xe3 ♖xa2 is a draw.

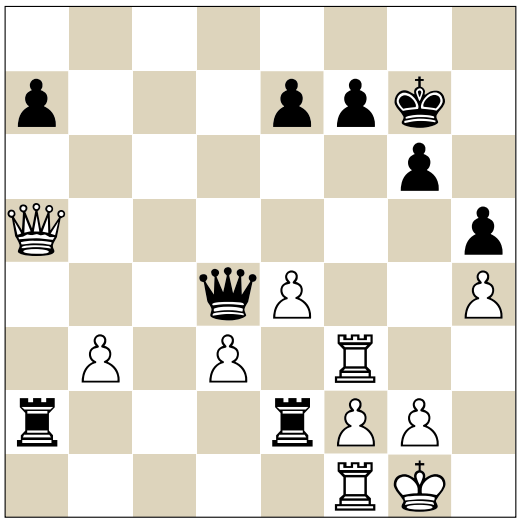
26...♖e2

26...♖8c3 was good too.

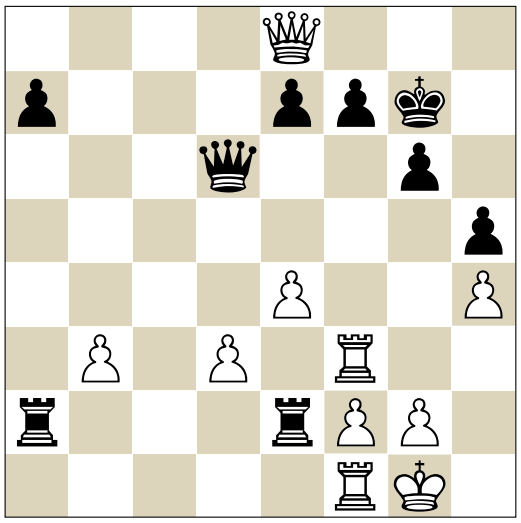
27.♗xd4+

27.♕a4 ♕xa4 28.bxa4 ♗xe3 29.♖xe3 ♖xa2 will end in a draw.

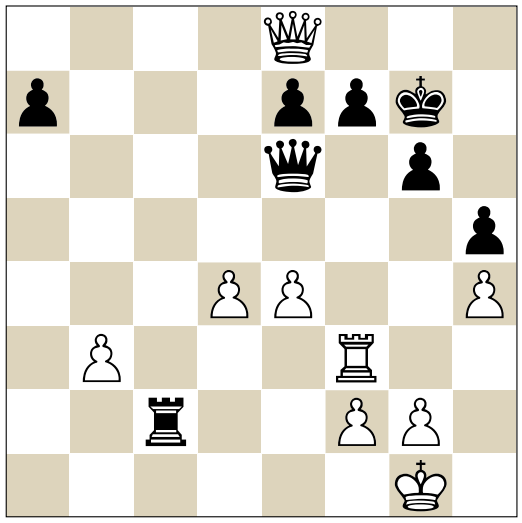
27...♕xd4 28.♖f3 ♖cc2 29.♖f1 ♖xa2 I have won back one pawn, but now White is fully mobilized.



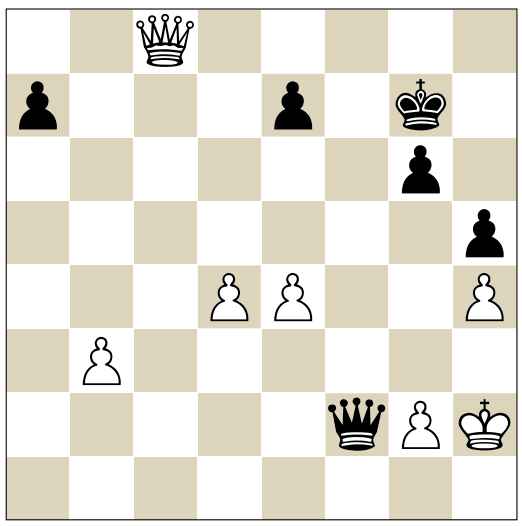
30.♕b5 This surprised me. Suddenly the queen is aiming for e8, but fortunately I am in time.
After 30.♕c7 ♕d6! will be enough to hold.
30...♕d6 31.♕e8



31...♕e6
31...f6!? is nice too: 32.♖g3 ♕xg3! 33.♕xe7+ ♔h6 34.♕f8+ ♔h7 35.♕f7+ ♔h6 with a draw.
32.♖c1 ♖ec2 33.♖xc2 ♖xc2 34.d4
Here for a while Hikaru thought that he got something going, but he forgot an important intermediate check:



34...♖c1+! 35.♔h2 ♖c8 36.♖xf7+ ♕xf7 37.♕xc8
And now the f2 pawn is hanging.
37...♕xf2
And with both the h4 and d4 pawns hanging, Black finally wins back the last pawn and the game ends in a draw.



38.♕b7 ♕xh4+ 39.♔g1 ♕e1+
Draw.
A fighting end to the tournament!

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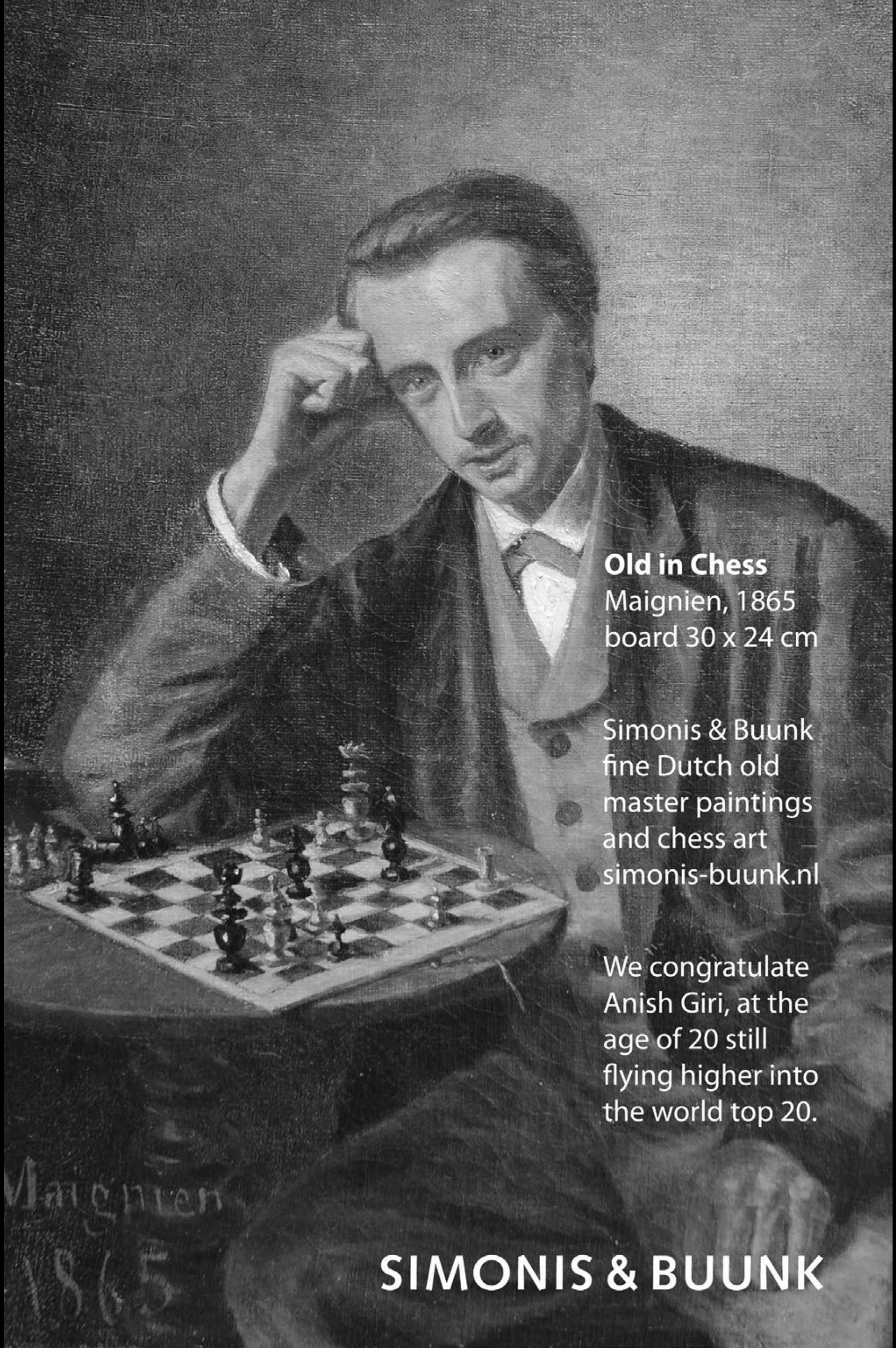

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We congratulate
Anish Giri, at the
age of 20 still
flying higher into
the world top 20.

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Anish Giri

My Junior Years in 20 Games

Born to a Russian mother and a Nepalese father, and raised in Russia, Japan and the Netherlands, Anish Giri can truly call himself an International Grandmaster. As a real globetrotter, he won the Russian U-12 championship while he was living in Japan.

Anish Giri became a chess grandmaster at the age of 14 years, 7 months and 2 days. At the time, in 2009, that meant he was the youngest grandmaster in the world. Few doubt that in the years ahead he will play a prominent role in the fight for the chess world championship.

Starting from the January 2013 list, Anish was the leading junior player in the FIDE world rankings. That position he inevitably lost on the 28th of June 2014, when he turned 20 and stopped being a Junior. His sights are now set on higher goals.

Anish is not only an exceptional player. As Contributing Editor to New In Chess, he has shown that he is also a talented writer with a profound knowledge of the game, a great sense of humour and contagious enthusiasm.

In this games collection, the young Dutch grandmaster sketches his rise to the chess elite and presents 20 fondly remembered games in his trademark style: instructive, witty and delightfully unimpressed by reputations.

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